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THE TEACHING OF *SOCIAL ISSUES*

THE SOURCES OF SOCIAL CONTROVERSY

SOCIAL CONTROVERSY IN THE CLASSROOM

PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF TEACHERS

R. BRUCE RAUP • FRANCES HUNTER FERREL • ELBERT W. BURR
FRED T. WILHELMS • LOWRY W. HARDING • A. W. ANDERSON

We Need Future - Centered Schools

AN EDITORIAL

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FRONTIERS OF HUMAN VALUES

by R. BRUCE RAUP

What are values? What is the valuing process and in what kinds of situations is this process called for? These are some of the questions which this penetrating article discusses in a context of world disagreements and conflicts. Those who must take responsibility for shaping the direction of education in these times will find this article stimulating and instructive. The author is Professor of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University.

A few years ago there was a play in our theatres entitled, "They Knew What They Wanted." It gave witness to what happens when a few people in a closely knit group set out, each to get what he discovers he really wants. These people developed dangerous personal tensions and conflict, risking the life of the group itself and approaching the limits of community tolerance. Did they really know what they wanted? At one time they had thought they did, or at least they had drifted into relationships and commitments which patterned their lives. But then their wants changed; they had become dissatisfied with the way their lots were cast. This is the setting. The recrystalizing of their wants and the reordering of their relations with each other and with society provided the medium for intense drama. But it also epitomized the seething process which marks great portions of the human quest.

The play might well have been called "the rediscovery of what they wanted, and what happened as a result". For such was the case with these people and such is the predicament in the whole human scene. It has, of course, always been the fortune of people to have to find their way through such predicaments, but today we are experiencing this with a new intensity and in a worldwide scope. Do we know what we want? Do our goals and our aspirations take on forms clear enough to release effective action toward their attainment? Are we not dissatisfied with the way our lots are cast? Have we not drifted into commitments which we would strive and struggle to have relaxed and revised? Do we know what we want to achieve through the efforts of our schools? As citizens, parents, teachers? As in the play on the stage, when one person or another becomes sure that he knows what he wants, he finds his quest cutting across the wants and aspirations of others. He may for the time know what *he* wants, but, along with the others, he finds that he does not know what *we* want.

The progressive educators feel they know what they are seeking, but so also do the conservative academicians. The followers of Dewey affirm their aims with vigor, but only to be confronted with the equal vigor of the differing followers of Hutchins. The vocationalists confront the generalists. The indoctrinators tangle with those who promote a "free" intellectual interest. The authoritarians and strict disciplinarians cannot work well with those who believe democratic classroooms build democratic character. The ardent religionists encounter the equally ardent non-sectarians. Severally, we educators may know each what he wants. But together, do we educators know what *we* want?

Russia knows what she wants. The United States, in that connection, knows what she wants. But what do they both together want? The Arabs know. The Palestine Jews know. When will they *together* know? The rugged individualist in our economy knows, as does the socialist, or the liberal, the New Dealer, or the Communist. But what do we together want?

What of the standards of marital relations? The European continental and the contrary traditional American standards are both firmly believed by their advocates, but the Kinsey study shows how they crisscross in the effective direction of the marital conduct

of our own people. Again, individuals or groups know what they want, but they differ and often very seriously so.

Why not let it go at that and get along with our differences? To answer this protest is to state the predicament of our times. The confluence of peoples and cultures today has been so greatly accellerated, and the demands of their mutal dependence are so imperative that complete *laissez faire* is out of the question. In an unprecedented degree, we in this country and we in the world are confronted with the necessity of knowing what *we together* want.

This is the great human frontier. There is no alternative to heeding its call, save chaos and terrifying prospects of destruction. It is this condition that has stirred the current mounting interest in value. For this *is* the problem of human values. To put it as simply as possible— How shall we conceive and attain the *common* beliefs and loyalties which will release our almost infinitely *varied* potentialities for the enjoyment of living?

In the degree that the need for community of value is necessary, it can come about, obviously, only through change of existing values. Thus the most real frontier of our times is this one of the reconstruction of human values. The task is staggering. But, with a place to take hold, the enterprise may become one of the most thrilling and liberating ones in which we can engage. Such a "place to take hold" is the modest suggestion of this paper. By noting something of what valuing means, it is possible to locate some major points at which change in value takes place and how this change may be directed. This is a kind of suggestion which, if it is sound, can be of unlimited usefulness to teachers.

WHAT VALUING MEANS

In the foregoing statement, wants have been closely identified with values. This is only partly true. Values are our *considered* wants. If we were limited in our conduct to our immediate, unconsidered desires and wants, there would be little, if any, difference between us and the animals. In fact we would be less well off than they, for they have an equipment of instincts which guides the compulsion of their basic impulses and protects them from imbalance and excesses. There would be no problem of human values if it were not for the fact that we find upon reflection that it is better to forego some immediate wants, desires and impulses in the interest of some still more desired things which we foresee and which unrestricted indulgence of the present want would preclude. This same relationship can also be seen positively. We have found from experience and upon reflection that the doing of some things now, whether or not they are distasteful in themselves, will lead to further events which we very much want.

In other words, value becomes important for us as we learn and act upon the knowledge that some things are good *for,* or bad *for,* other things we want, or want to avoid. Without going into the intricacies of the different theories of value, the writer finds this fairly simple conception of values as "our considered wants" both highly useful and at the same time not in too serious disagreement with those who hold broad theories different from his.

Shifting now from nouns to verbs, the next step is to note what we do when we value. In valuing, there is (1) always some *thing* that is valued, (2) always some person or persons who value the thing, and (3) always the anticipated better something *for* which this thing is held as a means. For example, we value apples, that is, we do more than just like their taste; we hold them to be good *for.* In proverbial language they "keep the doctor away". There is thus (1) the thing valued, apples, (2) the persons who value them, and (3) the anticipated good which is gained by eating the apples, the anticipated good feeling, the health. All three of these parts in valuing must be present and honored in the education of persons to be better and better valuers. If any one of them is neglected or any one developed exclusively of the others, the valuing is to that degree inadequate.

Moreover, change in any one of the three essentials in valuing is bound to change the whole value transaction. This is a useful observation; it affords the "place to take hold", for which we are seeking. In what follows, we will examine several well-known types of situation in which values come into crisis and in which change is therefore important. In these we can test the three-essential analysis of valuing to see wherein it may help us understand what to do.

TRANSITION POINTS IN VALUE DEVELOPMENT

Where means are lacking. One of the most widely spread types of situation in which value crises occur, and which set the conditions for important kinds of value change, is that in which people want something which they believe to be good, and yet do not have available ways and means of getting it. The baby reaching for the hopelessly distant moon, or for other objects too far for him to grasp, learns to curtail his aspirations and to be more contented with objects more within his reach. If he were to continue indefinitely to reach for the moon, his elders would become disturbed. For capacity to learn how to get a better working relationship between wanted objects and ability to achieve them is a part of the capacity to be intelligent.

But there also is what Kohler's chimpanzee discovered. He could reach the bananas by fitting together two sticks or by piling up boxes. He could use some things to get others. We know how rapidly the human infant learns this. Things become good for other things he wants. What he aspires to, as for him better, begins thus to make him selective among things which surround him. He prizes those which he can use to obtain better things, rating them more highly than those to which he attaches no such usefulness. He values these things. But when either the animal or the child does not find things which help him to reach that better thing he wants, one or more kinds of change may take place. First, as in the case of the moon, he may cease to aspire. His wants may change. Within limits, this is a healthy change, one which all persons and all people must learn readily to make. When good things sought are hopelessly out of the range of any means available to us, it is often better to change these objects of our aspiring.

Another kind of change, however, is not so healthy. Persons cease to aspire at all. Disappointment and failure to find means at hand serve to deaden the nerve of the imaginative construction of better things to seek. There results a contentment far below the level of people's capacity for dreaming and for realizing better things. Poverty is one of the chief sources of such atrophy of powers. Thwarted on every hand by the absence of means, persons can no longer suffer the disappointments which they meet when they dare to dream and to try. So they stop at a low level. Their values have changed. In terms of the three essentials in valuing, anticipation of a better state of affairs has been quelled and lost because the things which would attain the better enjoyments have not been available. What things they can control are more than exhausted in getting barest shelter and inadequate food. The third essential, the persons who thus value things, have thus something happening to their characters. For without vision, people do perish.

We sometimes like to point to those exceptional persons who break through poverty or rise in spite of authoritarian conditions. Or we hear it claimed that a change of things and means would not make for better aspiration and character in these people. The important power, it is argued, is in themselves. But this is only a shallow plausibility. Persons *are* different. No doubt these differences operate often from birth. To say however that things and means make no differences in how people develop into persons is to deny the obvious. Imaginative construction, dreams and aspirations must indeed be cultivated, but, in a vacuum of things and means, such development is abortive. Persons grow sanely only as they establish mastery of things through which they control the course of their lives, things which they value as good *for* the better things they seek.

The successful teacher knows that these statements are true. Children with goals and aspirations stirred and formulated by devices we teachers can control, can fail bitterly as characters and persons because they do not achieve the mastery of things through which such visions may be realized and become strong elements in their characters. They may want to be scientists and engineers, but either do not pay the price in effort or cannot pay the price in money. Or in an economic depression, there may not be opportunity for the realization of their dreams. They may want to be great and good persons, only to have their dreams dashed and their spirits hardened by the sordid motivation of whole areas of adult social practice. Within the range of the soundness of these observations, the teacher is forever challenged by the need for optimum relations between what people aspire to and their powers and available resources for attainment. And in the case of any particular individual or group, the teacher can at least deal with difficulties and make plans for improvement by examining the value life of the person in any one or more of its three essentials. In the special type of situation cited, stress has been put upon being alert to the person's ability to have and to command the *things* which are necessary as media for the attainment of goals to which he learns to aspire.

Where means are available but vision is lacking. This is in contrast with the preceding type of value crisis. People may have available ways and means of great potentiality for good, but not know adequately what that good is. The case of this made famous in literature is the miser. Gold—but what *for?* Just to have? But just to *have* things without valuing them as good *for* better things is to starve the soul of the possessor. Our value stream becomes stagnant, our goods pale, if we do not keep what we enjoy for itself tempered and preganant with the still better things *for* which they are good. This seems to be a rule of all life, and our values are no exception. To stop expanding and refining and enriching is to begin to die.

This is a sobering problem for us who must carry the responsibility of the enormous possessions and powers of this country. Science, technology, promotional and organizational "know-how", ability to build, power to destroy, courage to undertake, health and stamina to endure, a unique ideal tradition of freedom, a multitude of artists in every field, an educational system without equal, an unlimited capacity to play and to enjoy,—all steeped in an amazing *habit of succeeding,*—this is our gold. Do we

know, with it all, what we want? What is all this good *for?*

Taking again the analytic approach provided in the three essentials of valuing, this situation calls for change in the larger ideal values with which we work. We have *things* in abundance. What they are to be good *for* is our task to discover, even to create. The release of atomic energy has forcibly reminded us that this is the paramount order of the day. For as the miser's gold, unemployed, destroys him, so our proud development of technological resource and power and wealth will destroy us if we do not put it to greater good use.

Implicit in these statements however is an assumption that we can know what this greater good use will be. Do *we* know? Persons and groups and whole peoples claim to know,—but do *we together* know? Is there a common aspiration, one which, amid our great diversity, will direct to the common good the use we make of things? The answer is at this time clearly, No. What then? The resources of this country and of every other country that wants life itself to go on, and to go on to better things, must be thrown into finding and making the answer to this question.

Three things will be true of this answer as it comes. First, it must be conceived as a way of dealing with *things*. Emerson complained that "things are in the saddle". This is still true. The solution is not found however in putting a curse on *things*. The harmful effects of engrossment in the handling of things come from the absence of quality and direction in the way they are conceived and used. What is needed is their impregnation with the directives of the greater good. Thus, again, our problem of shaping this greater good. But the conception of this good is not independent of the things we shape and manipulate to attain it. It gets much of its character from them as they get their value from it. The greater good is not some disembodied entity, independent of things. It is rather the strength and the release of the human spirit that comes with the increasing mastery of things and the shaping of them to ends of good which man, thus always newly empowered, can and dares to conceive. To degrade *things* is not to elevate the human spirit. It is to render this spirit empty and futile.

Outstanding among all the needs of our times is the reconstruction of the great, common orienting ideals of human good, drawing upon the past indeed, but especially translating our things—our science, our technical and promotional knowledge and skills—into the forms of profound human satisfaction that are latent within them. To separate the great human values from the things of our day is to make the values into innocuous verbalisms and to relegate our necessary preoccupation with things to moral chaos.

A second characteristic essential of the greater common good when it takes form is that it emerges through change. This change will not be in the great values of every people except ours. It will have to include ours. Anyone who has enjoyed the large measures of freedom in which life in this country is carried on will thrill to the clear note in Ex-president Hoover's recent birthday address in Iowa. The writer is caught up heart and soul in its meaning. To quote:

> "The soul of America is its freedom of mind and spirit in man. Here alone are the open windows through which pours the sunlight of the human spirit. Here alone is human dignity not a dream, but an accomplishment."
> "Many great writers and statesmen have attempted to express what we mean by that word (American). But there is an unponderable feeling within it which reaches to the soul of our people and defies measure."

In whatever patterns the world's common goals and guides are worked out, I want them to include this way of deep human satisfaction for which words are so hard to find. I insist this shall not be destroyed, that it shall not be successfully defied or treacherously undermined, that it shall not be permitted to suffer from neglect. But our human good cannot be imposed on others in the world to the wholesale exclusion of what they too find good. Perhaps we can learn from them as we urge that they shall learn from us. Is there any reason why the best of both should not be incorporated in the new world values?

Nor can we insist that our ideal values shall stay rigidly within the keeping of things as we now know them. If the imperatives within the relations of things as we deal with them require changes in these ways of dealing, changes made necessary also by the very human good latent within them, then it is perilous to become rigidly fixed to our existing ways of dealing. Perhaps the very freedom which Mr. Hoover rightly celebrates will be our surest guarantee that there shall be no freezing of our ways of dealing with things nor of the particular forms of our greater human goods. Does not the very insistence upon freedom require a corresponding expectation of change when the human spirit in its freedom finds necessity for change?

In the world today, one of the chief obstacles to the birth of adequate human values may indeed be not the gross evils, but precisely those values which we now cherish most. But this will be the case, only if we embrace bigotry, and cease to change and grow with needs as they arise.

The third thing which should be said about the great common human values is that they can come about only through the active participation and the voluntary consent of people. This is another way of saying that the human person is always the *valuer.* Valuing and values have no other source of either their initiation or their sustained operation. And, in the final analysis, it is here in the human person that they undergo any changes which occur. Just as the greater common values must incorporate our dealing with things, so too they must have their generating power in the persons who are committed to them.

The human individual as a person is so inherently social, so integrally a part of the communication in which as a self and person he comes about, that his tendency to seek and to prize community of belief and understanding and purpose scarcely needs further explanation. That which does need emphasis, however, is his claim to respect, not solely in his common social composition but in his uniqueness as a valuer. Kant's teaching that we should never treat individuals as means only, but also as ends in themselves, bears directly upon this point. The individual may indeed value in common with others, but may never in his rightful stature abdicate either entirely or irrevocably his unique claim to value as he himself sees best.

Any institution of human control which gets at common consent without the active and free participation of those concerned is to that degree by-passing its chief source of stable power and violating the most cherishable of all our goods, the integrity of the individual's claim to unique self-determination. The new institutions of society will build on sand if they seek a human community by shortcuts which deny thus the free and active participation of the people concerned. This is dealing with the tap-root of democracy.

It is proposed thus that the needed world community,—the common persuasion of what we together want,—(1) must be conceived and sought with full account taken of our mastery of *things,* (2) must come about through a genuine willingness of us *all* to *change,* and (3) must be founded in the reconstructed, *voluntary* choices of the people concerned. In schools this would mean that: (1) things would be taught in their relation to the human good which they make possible, and changes in character would be sought which would make such learning effective; (2) young people would grow up realizing that they can have deep convictions and great loyalties and commitments, but that these are but part of the contribution which they can make to more inclusive world values, and that the doors to change may never rightly be closed for all time; and (3) democracy would be practiced; real experience would be had in the achievement of *common* cause with those who are different or in the weaving of group choice and decision with full respect and play given to the active participation of those concerned. The new world can be started in our schools, if we will genuinely do these things.

Where differing interests compete for the same thing. Two types of situation have thus far been noted in which there can be acute need for changes in value, (1) where people dream of good and have no ways and means to attain it and (2) where people are immersed in *things* and yet have no common ideals in which such things can be translated into effective value forms. Now a third well-known type of situation is one in which people who value differently are in conflict over possession or control of the same thing. This may be the most crucial of all the types, for it most often brings matters to a crisis and makes change imperative.

The case may seem very simple in structure. Two children want the same piece of candy. Any one of several ways of settling the matter may be tried by them. (1) One might take the candy by physical force, even resorting to violence; (2) One could be clever and trick the other out of it; (3) they might be restrained from either (1) or (2) by having learned, either from experience or from elders, that these were not good ways, and then resort could be had to (4) trade,—one take the candy, the other to receive from him something else which they both value—a knife, a toy, a trip, another goodie; or (5) they could divide the candy; (6) they could reserve either one having it until the supply could be increased and each have a piece; or assuming some maturity, they might talk it over and decide to leave the candy and turn to something else, something they would have talked over and agreed upon.

But the case is after all not as simple as it seemed at first. Strangely, it is not only the piece of candy each wants. There is something of personal pride. "*I* want the candy." "If *you* have some, *I* will have some too." "*You* are not going to get ahead of *me.*" In any settlement reached, the thing sought is indeed important, but more difficult to deal with is the one who wants the thing, his character, his self, his deeply sub-conscious reasons for wanting to succeed in getting the thing for himself. Two of the three essentials of valuing are thus prominent again— the *thing* valued and the *valuer.* And, in fact, the third essential is hovering around, waiting to be claimed. For the needed change in the valuers can come only as their minds meet on *the better values* which alone can resolve the difficulty.

Note a few of these better values which have

been implicit. They are often subtle and escape notice. What a commitment, for example, is seen in the rejection of force, violence and trickery. This achievement of mind and character transforms the beast into man. Perhaps the world's greatest immediate need for achievement of community of value is thus epitomized when two children want the same piece of candy. The world is still an untutored child when it resorts to war, violence, trickery to get what is wanted.

Another value implied in this case, is seen as the parties find that they can think together and make plans for a good which they both accept as better than the candy alone would have been. They have learned, and it has started to become a part of their effective characters, that it pays to think and talk and plan matters through together; that they together can actually create a better good for both of them. Thus the valuers are deeply changed by the finding or creating of the third essential of adequate valuing, the effective ideal of the greater common good.

Not least of the outcomes of such experiences as these, is the discovery that the mutual way, that is, the more genuinely human way is indeed *better.* People like it more than they like other ways. And what people learn and like better, they will return to; they will repeat. Thus do values change. Creatively formed ideas of the better common goods found necessary in the crises of human relations, effect basic changes in the characters of the valuers. And perhaps most significant of all, they devote our absorption in dealing with *things,* not *away* from the things, but into a frame of mind and heart wherein these very things are transfigured into the value agencies of the greater human good. However much we may or may not enjoy the handling and doing of things just in and for themselves, they do increasingly take on the quality of the profounder human satisfactions to which their use becomes committed. Their more precious value is in what they are good *for.* And the greatest good *for* which they can serve is that which emerges in the voluntary common persuasion of liberated people.

VALUES IN TRANSITION

Implicit throughout these pages is the observation that lesser values change more rapidly than the greater ones; that individual or small group values change more rapidly than the inclusively human ones; that dealing with things races on ahead of the realized meaning of these things in the larger human good; in a word, that there is always peril in the lag of value changes. But there is also a challenge in it. Let us see this all in a familiar setting and thus seek to sharpen the meaning of the whole paper. Across the countryside, on the way to the State Fair, we see the work of the farmers being done by auto, truck and tractor. As far as the eye can reach, not a draft horse is in sight. Then, at the Fair, great barns, lined with stables, house magnificent draft mares, colts, yearlings and stallions. In the judging pavillions are repeated in exact detail the scenes of fifty years ago. The breeders and the public, awed by the excellence of the stock, await the decisions of the judges. The winners are applauded.

But what is it all about? Have draft horses joined dogs and cats as the pets of man? Is this a pet show? As far as service on the farms is concerned, the draft horse is coming rapidly to have something of the status of a Russian Wolf-hound at the end of a leash in the Easter Parade. Thus we celebrate what *has been* useful to man in fulfilling his basic economic needs. What the animals now are good *for* has changed. They are primarily an esthetic experience, a form of artistic development, and whatever other satisfaction we realize in the "human" relations with the animal pet. People do like these experiences and, whatever the diagnosis, the man of our civilization seems bound to be that way.

But there are also on exhibit at the State Fair all kinds of farm machinery. Fifty years ago there were a dozen small sheds and plots with hay rakes, mowers or popping gas engines. Today the dozens have become hunreds, the variety is unlimited, and the small plots are literally acres. This is not like the horse pavillion; it is another world. There is life, but it is the life peculiarly of man. He no longer depends on the animal to do his heavy work; he has rather domesticated the raw forces of nature and channeled them through devices of his own creation, shaped to do his work for him. Here the outlets of his spirit have changed. Instead of dealing with the vibrant energy of the horse, he is back at the source of it all. Only in museums will be make pets of his machines long after they have ceased to serve his purposes.

As man thus becomes independent of the animals, he becomes more dependent upon cooperative relations, with his fellows. What does he see in these machines? He sees factories, industrial workers, organized labor and management, displacement of labor, change in occupations, new leisure, potential abundance and less heavy, physical strain.

What then do we celebrate in these machines? Is it not the human society which they mediate? The machine does not, as we are wont to say, dehumanize man. The opposite is the case. But do we know what forms these human goods will take? This is the rub. Perhaps we continue so much to celebrate the useless horse partly just because we have not yet learned the beautiful and inspiring forms of human good which are urging to be born in the medium of our new achievements.

The State Fair, thus seen, is more than a figure of speech. It is dramatic. In a moment and in one place, we see the all absorbing predicament of modern man. While he desperately celebrates the value objects of years gone by, he busies himself with new *things,* gropes toward the fulfillment of his newly discovered powers, and still wonders and yearns and struggles to be clear about what he wants, about what these things are all good *for.* And this is indeed the new human frontier. ✦ ✦ ✦

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In July the American Education Fellowship issued a statement condemning the banning of THE NATION from New York City Schools as a blow at "freedom of thought and discussion." The statement, approved by members of the board of directors of AEF, was sent to the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools of New York City. It warned that New York City school officials were setting an example for the children and youth of the city which might nullify the efforts of teachers to develop respect for and devotion to the principles of American democracy.

At the same time AEF, through its representative, Goodwin Watson, of Columbia University, offered its support to a committee formed to combat the banning and headed by Archibald MacLeish.

AEF's action came soon after it learned details of the banning of THE NATION. The magazine was left off the official periodical list of New York City public schools because of a series of allegedly anti-Catholic articles written by Paul Blanshard. When the action was taken on June 24, four members of the Board of Education—the minimum necessary to act on a measure—were reported to have been present. Two members opposed the banning of the nation but voted to approve the library list so as not to disrupt subscriptions to about 250 periodicals.

The complete text of the AEF statement follows.

> In forbidding the use of the *Nation* in the New York City Schools, the Board of Superintendents and the Board of Education have struck a blow at the freedom of thought and discussion which is the cornerstone of the structure of American civil liberties. They have set an example for the children and youth of New York which will nullify the efforts of teachers and school officials to develop respect for and devotion to the principles which underlie all the basic documents of American democracy. They have bowed to pressure from a group which desires to be immune from criticism, and in so doing have brought into jeopardy not only the freedom of the press but also freedom of religious thought and controversy.
>
> The American Education Fellowship has consistently fought for the rights of teachers to teach and of learners to learn. It has warned against the encroachments of all kinds of tyranny upon the free discussion of all issues of public interest. It denounces with all the energy at its command this intolerable attack upon American liberties, and calls upon the Board of Superintendents and the Board of Education of New York City to rescind their un-American action relative to the use of the *Nation* in the schools of New York City.

✦ ✦ ✦

AEF spurred its summer membership drive by sending a dozen kits to people at various schools in the country who volunteered to help. The kits contained books and pamphlets of the Fellowship for display purposes along with price lists, order blanks and membership cards.

The kits served to get the name and the publications of AEF before many people in summer courses. Many membership applications and publication orders resulted. Special thanks for their successful efforts in pushing AEF during the summer go to Miss Carrie B. Edmondson, State Teachers College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Harold G. Shane, Superintendent of the Winetka Board of Education, Winetka, Illinois, Professor W. H. Burton of Harvard University, Cambridge Massachusetts, Professor Robert H. Beck of the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Thanks also to the many others who have used the kits to promote AEF.

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LETTER TO A TEACHER: ON HANDLING CONTROVERSIAL QUESTIONS

by **FRED T. WILHELMS**

A down-to-earth discussion of controversial questions—what they are and how to deal with them in the classroom. This straightforward and stimulating article comes from the Associate Director of the Consumer Education Study, National Education Association, who has since gone to San Francisco State College.

So, my young friend, you are resolved that in your classroom controversial questions shall get the treatment they deserve? Well then, the first thing you will need is the ability to recognize one when you see it.

A lot of teachers lack that abilitiy. For instance, I'm willing to bet that right now a good many of them are treating the statement that margerine is substantially as good a food as butter as if it were a controversial question. It isn't. As near as I can make out, it fits precisely the definition of a "scientific truth"—to be modified if new evidence arises but valid till then. On the other hand, undoubtedly, many more teachers are thoughtlessly treating the proposals to repeal the special taxes on margerine as if there were no question about them—at most, teaching the "right side" and giving a passing nod to the "other side." Yet, regardless of what you think of the arguments either way, here is a genuine question of social policy.

How can you tell what, for school purposes, is a controversial question, and what isn't? Let's admit that the dividing line isn't easy to draw, but certainly it shouldn't be determined by the intensity of the feelings that happen to have been aroused. Take the matter of race relations as an example: Since the sovereign American people has written into its Constitution full citizenship for the Negro, I believe no American teacher has a right to treat as a legitimate controversy whether Negroes should be denied any part of a citizen's legal status. The issue is in some areas acrimonious, and I sympathize with teachers who must find a way of living with it, but the excitement about it does not make it, in the educational sense, a controversial question.

On the other hand, there are genuinely controversial questions about which little fuss is made—many more of them than we generally recognize—matters on which we have no right to teach a set view as if it were thoroughly established. Most of us have taken a position on each so long ago that—especially if there is no public debate to dramatize the issue—we have forgotten it *is* only one side of a fair question. Or, unfamiliar with a special field, we are simply ignorant of differences that are "hot as a firecracker" among a small, earnest group. Worst of all, we're pretty likely to assume that the "other side" is purely specious anyway. And so, day after day, we casually hand down certainties authorized by no known arbiter of uncertainty. If you really mean business about giving controversial questions the right treatment, you'd better learn to see deeper than the current arguments in the press. Just who gave you the right last week to rule *ex parte* that installment selling should be curbed?

Perhaps one useful, rough guide is to treat as controversial questions matters of social policy on which society has not yet made up its mind. Note that this excludes differences of opinion which simply do not require—should never be submitted to—social decision. If the schools have any business at all with a host of private and personal as well as minority group matters, it is only to teach tolerance—nay more, appreciation—of the other fellow's habits or views and a democratic zeal to protect them even if they seem "queer." Such differences are not controversial questions in the educational sense.

All in all, you are not likely to go far wrong if with sincerity you stop to ask yourself whether the set of beliefs and attitudes you should like to install with respect to some matter really are so clearly established as to be past legitimate questioning—or simply your own preferences.

That leads us directly to your second personal need: zeal to subordinate your own views to a searching, objective inquiry that will give the youngsters full opportunity to see the central problem and the issues surrounding it and to make a start toward their own, independent conclusions. Such objectivity is hard to achieve, especially since it is highly desirable that as an adult citizen you *should have* views of your own. Saying to the students, even by implication or unconscious, subtle suggestion, "Now we must look at the other side, too," simply isn't good enough. Unless your group feel that *you and they* are setting out together to get as close as you can to the heart of a fresh, vital matter, something is wrong.

Incidentally, in their attempts to be impartial, some teachers remind me of a week-kneed referee who

thinks that to be "fair" he has to call as many fouls on one side as on the other. They think that a "balanced" treatment means making an equally strong case for each side. If you simply go after the truth you won't fall into that error. Another thing: It isn't your role to be the eternal compromiser. The constructive harmonization of differences is a good thing, but as Van Til points out so repetitiously that his friends eventually catch on, "The middle ground is a position, too, and the would-be impartial leader has no more right to take it than either extreme." Besides, it's often the only position of the three that's no good.

A third thing you, as a person, owe your students is *depth of perception.* Let's first put it crudely: You need to be smart enough to "know the angles." A dismaying amount of thinking is blurred by clichès like "Business wants....." that ignore great and pervasive differences within the ranks of business. An awful lot of time is wasted on the beautiful arguments with which public relations men beguile the public—and never getting to the real issues which all the insiders know are the issues. It's up to you to make yourself an insider.

But cut it deeper than that: It's up to you also to make yourself a *philosopher,* to see beneath this and that passing issue the great, continuing questions that face mankind. Probably a majority of the divisive public issues of our day root down in fundamental, long-standing differences in what men expect of organized society, what they think a government is *for.* Even though a problem is important in itself, it ought somehow also to be made an *example*—this year's variant *sub specie aeternitatis.*

In all this it is not so much that it is your function to "explain" the basic questions at issue. But if *your* perception of the real nature of the problem stops at the surface, the students will hardly go deeper. And if *you* have a distorted picture of the social and political forces at work on each side of a question, you can hardly expect your students to arrive at an analysis that would be a sound basis for a program of action.

TECHNICS

In this section let's take a good bit for granted. I assume that you know that the lively, controversial questions of the day are a different kind of subject matter and simply cannot be taught out of a book or even within the four walls of a classroom. You can get plenty of guidance on teaching devices that match the subject matter—excursions, interviews, the use of many kinds of material from many interested sources, etc. If you don't have the energy and initiative for that sort of thing—if you choose to go on getting all the answers out of one book, or supplying them yourself—it's probably better to let the whole thing alone than to make an academic pretense.

I assume, too, that you are mature enough to know that a social problem worth taking up at all is worth treating soberly. Simply rule out sarcasm and every form of pettiness. If it's serious question for many people, treat it that way, and keep the treatment on a high plane. If it isn't, why not just skip it?

What I really want to get at are five mental habits and procedures I believe you and your class have got to master.

1. *Focus on the problem, not on the fight.* A controversial question arises because people have a problem on their hands, think they see a way out, and seek action. The opposition may come from groups who do not sense the problem, are not affected by it, or for some reason do not want anything done about it; or it may come from groups equally eager to solve the problem, who are sold on different ways of doing it.

Now when you come to study the resultant controversy, you have a choice: You can analyze the problem and *then* see what the various parties propose to do about it, evaluating each set of proposals in the light of the problem to be solved. Or, like irresponsible hoodlums cheering on a street fight, you can analyze tactics and titillate interest by starting a miniature replica of the struggle within your classroom, while forgetting the objectives.

I think you simply haven't any cornerstone under your thinking until you understand what the need is, what is wanted, how important it is. Maybe the problem is an old, abiding plague of the human race, suddenly accentuated under modern conditions; try to see it in its historical perspective. Maybe it is a brand new product of our new environment; try to see the forces that have shaped it. Nothing else will help you so much to the objectivity you need as to keep your eye on the fundamental objective.

2. *Hunt for common ground.* Rarely are the parties in a controversy wholly in disagreement. They may be agreed on objectives, disagreed on means; or agreed on at least *some* objectives or *some* means; they may, in fact, be agreed on just about everything —perhaps without realizing it. For democratic action whatever real common ground exists is precious. For it is the starting point toward an acceptable solution. Hunting it out bears no relation to the weak-kneed practice of compromising away essential points of either faction in order to achieve a polite harmony. In a hot controversy the school may be almost the only place where enough calm prevails so that the points of agreement can be perceived and built upon. A school is acting irresponsibly if, like some newspapers, it stirs up more conflict than actually exists by sensationalizing what does exist.

One related bit of advice: Don't be too glib in

stating other people's positions for them. You've no right either to exaggerate their demands or to whittle them down to something "reasonable." If labor and management, for instance, are involved, let each of them tell you—directly or through its publications—where they stand. Let your students learn to use primary sources instead of hearsay.

3. *Define the issues.* Having identified the common ground, you are in position to identify the residual points at issue. Strip them down as far as possible to the real differences. For instance, there has been quite a debate about grade labeling, with some pretty strong impugning of motives on both sides. Eventually the leaders of the two factions discovered that they were wholly agreed on the basic purpose of labeling, which is to give consumers accurate information to choose by. It became clear, furthermore, that both were agreed on "descriptive" rather than grade labeling for all products except foods—and pretty well agreed on the grade labeling of certain foods. That restricted the area of debate almost entirely to processed fruits and vegetables; and it narrowed the issue to whether a grade label or a descriptive label better informs a canned food buyer—a a question that can be worked out without much rancor.

However, the purpose of defining the issues is not necessarily to moderate the debate. It is to determine exactly what the specific points of disagreement are. Once more, one should not be too cavalier in stating those issues for all parties. Find out as directly as possible from the parties themselves—and don't be taken in by the red herrings they sometimes use to keep the public from nosing out the real issues.

At this point, then, you will be able to set down what a lawyer would call the "stipulations" (the points which are not in question) and the issues (the points that are). Work out as precise a wording as you can. Keep it in view. Try to make it calm and unemotional. Your purpose is not to stir up an excited, glandular reaction.

4. *Develop criteria or standards of reference.* The great basic premises, from which specific controversial questions are merely offshoots, all too often go unspoken, unquestioned, and unrecognized. No one can argue a specific issue soundly unless he knows what his reference criteria are. And no youngster is likely to clarify his standards of reference except as he is forced to apply them to specifics.

Given any specific issue you need to keep probing behind it: "You believe in democracy, don't you? What do you think it means in this situation? How does this proposal square up with your conception of democracy?" Such probing will enrich and realize the concept of democracy at the same time that it enlightens the issue. Religion is another good source of value standards: "How do the teachings of your religion apply? Are you going to back a proposal contrary to them?" The American codes of sportsmanship and fair play are another source: "If it's important to help an opponent up when he has been knocked down, what should you do about this social question?"

Get the reference criteria stated clearly and simply. Keep referring to them. Don't forget, either, that the differences which show up on a specific question may stem back to legitimate differences in basic premises. So don't demand unanimity on standards of reference. Work for as much agreement in standards as you can genuinely get; respect the residual differences. For instance, on some question of economic regulation, a whole class will agree on democracy as a frame of reference. But one youngster's concept of democracy may stress freedom of the strong to rise, while another is more interested in protection for all the people, even the less able. After all, one of the blessings in a democracy is the right to help define it. Help each to see just what his premises are and how they affect his conclusions.

5. *Be realistic about the proposed alternatives.* Nothing so dismays me as to see one of the great persisting problems of mankind casually "solved" in about three days by a roomful of students. Who do they think they are, to be so much wiser than their elders—Little Orphan Annie?

There is precisely one difference between them and their elders: The grownups have to face the realities—lack of money, public apathy, politics, etc. And until school children also have to look those realities in the eye, the whole school treatment of social "problems" is a travesty.

A large number of the divisive social questions of our day hinge on the expenditure of public tax funds. "Where's the money coming from?" is a real and pressing question to responsible adults (even if often used speciously by obstructionists). It is seldom given very realistic attention in the classroom; there the unspoken assumption seems to be that if a public proposal is "good," it ought to be supported without further question. Well, a lot of things would be "good" for my family, too, but we still have to make a budget, and it never covers all of them. I do not mean that we should teach defeatism or timidity; but can't we establish the constructive attitude of a *responsible* person?

Another large share of public issues hinges around the imposition of social controls and regulation. Am I right in feeling that in the classroom situation the dice are commonly loaded a wee bit in favor of governmental action? Not because teachers are socialist or collectivist, but—I think—because the neat, orderly, blueprinted way is easier to describe and defend,

to some extent compelling upon the mind. What we call loosely the "free enterprise" way (referring here not merely to business affairs) is less susceptible of charting and orderly classroom presentation. But, to put it mildly, it has turned out to be a pretty fair way of getting things done.

Again, I am not arguing for a "conservative" line or saying that we should not present forcefully the potentials of wise group action. But when we are presumably considering alternatives, let's *really* scrutinize them—on out to the ultimate commitment.

Obviously such treatment is likely to take more time than is generally given to a bit of subject matter. Well, we don't assign a geometry problem and then stop halfway through it because it takes too long. And the analogy is uncomfortably exact.

6. *And, of course, keep your weight off the decision.* The teacher and the school are not arbiters of social questions. The basic assumption underlying the school's presenting controversial questions at all is that it will throw no official weight into influencing the student one way or another.

Sometimes I wonder how many schools really live up to that assumption.

PURPOSES

All in all, the technics of handling controversial questions in the classroom are easy enough to learn if one really believes in it. The more difficult—and the more important—thing may be to get and keep clearly in mind what we are after when we do it.

Certainly it is a good argument for classroom consideration of controversial questions that they are the *agenda of our times*—the matters of policy on which our citizenry must choose a line of action, or decide not to act. If we can create a broad basis of problem-solving intelligence on such matters, we surely cannot be wrong.

Yet I suspect the main thing we are after is a cluster of *concomitant learnings* which will apply in all future situations. If that is so, we ought to decide definitely what they are and proceed accordingly. Why not make up for yourself a statement of your long-term goals? You will likely find them mostly falling under the broad phrase, *good citizenship.* That demands many abilities and skills and attitudes, such as the desire and ability to get and evaluate relevant information, and to influence public opinion. I challenge you to find one of these to which a thoughtful consideration, in school, of the controversial problems of our day does not contribute mightily.

In closing, I should like to focus upon just one point in this matter of citizenship. In terms of the needs of our times, who is the best citizen? Is he really the rather complaisant, tender-minded conformist who always "goes along" with every new proposal (though not necessarily doing anything about it)? Much of our school procedure seems to asume that he is. Or have some of our best contributors been tough-minded people with enough vinegar in their souls to vote "no" now and then, to force an idea to prove itself before they roll up their sleeves and go to work for it?

There is an open question of values there, which every teacher must work out for himself. But, for myself, I have a hunch we have been building toward too "nice" and soft-minded a race of citizens. I feel we ought to work for a fierce love of liberty, a certain raw-boned, sturdy independence against the seeping encroachments of social conformism and bureaucratic meddling. At the time of Shays' Rebellion, Thomas Jefferson said it was a good thing for the tree of liberty to be watered now and then with the blood of patriots. Even in school it is worth an occasional bumped head.

That says it badly, but maybe you see what I mean. Totalitarianism and stateism (the democratic variety included) thrive on a love of a nice, neat order of things, of going along with the crowd. Running a lasting democracy takes more gumption than that. It takes people who can stand up on their own feet, think for themselves, and call a spade a spade. It takes people with the sense of command to be *masters* of their state, and the critical sense and nerve to blister it when it does badly. The love of democracy is a pallid, wishy-washy thing if it does not include real affection for the give-and-take, the rough-and-tumble of a society where free men stand up for their own interests and ideas.

The above is over-concentrated on the "rugged individual" angle, of course. I have done it deliberately because that angle seems to receive so little attention nowadays. Democracy also requires the largest measure of ability to work together cooperatively. It takes the ability to compromise; or, better to search out common ground and work for a constructive harmonization of differences. It takes a powerful insight into the potentialities of group action and wisdom in using those potentialities.

You see, the problem is one of achieving a nice balance: between the ability to yield and the courage to stand out alone, if necessary; between the ability to make a fight and the ability to cooperate; between a fierce insistence on essential personal liberties and genuine appreciation of social action.

And that, I think, is where the wise treatment of controversial questions can make its greatest contribution. We can teach boys and girls to reason out a position and then stand by their guns, courageously and tenaciously; in the same breath we can help them

see how others have honestly and honorably arrived at *their* positions and deserve respect. We can teach them how to influence the opinion of others; and, not less important, how to be influenced open-mindedly by the contributions of others. We can teach them not weakly to compromise away essential ground; and yet, by constructive harmonization, to gain essential ground by compromise. We can educate them as the royal masters of their society; and at the same time as loyal subjects.

Perhaps in all this we have nothing greater to teach than the *art of creative discussion.* It is that rare discussion wherein everyone makes his unique contribution, yet each learns more than he contributes —where a group as a whole comes to a position better than any one member could have come to by himself. It depends more on creative listening than on clever talking. It stems, not from a sole desire to clinch one's own position by argument, but from a drive to get nearer the truth through the pooled insights of all.

Such discussion can be held only in an atmosphere of democracy. It can be maintained only by those who in some measure know the meaning of democracy, who respect themselves and others equally. In some small way, every controversy is a crisis in democratic self-management. If you can help boys and girls in your classroom frankly to face up to crisis after crisis, each time coming out on higher ground of courage, insight, and mutual good will and respect, we need have no fear for the future of our nation's democracy.

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THEY LEARN TO THINK FOR THEMSELVES

by **FRANCES HUNTER FERRELL**

✦ ✦ ✦

Few efforts have been made to identify the habits of thinking to be developed through the study of social issues. In this article the reader will find suggested habits of thought and ways of developing them in the study of American history. The author is a teacher of history in the John Marshall High School, Chicago.

Many are the teaching positions which are lost by the teacher's presentation or stand upon controversial issues. It has been said that the teacher must teach the truth, but teach it with discretion. This, however, can mean many things, such as presenting the truth with a Republican slant in a Republican community or with a Democratic slant in a community of Democrats. You are all no doubt familiar with the story of the man who wrote an unbiased account of the American Revolution from the English point of view. So the knowledge that we must teach the truth with discretion does not help us much unless we give the word discretion a definition. Using the dictionary, I see that discretion means prudence, which means wisdom, care, judgment. So let us teach controversial issues with discretion.

I should like to consider the teacher's role in regard to the presentation of controversial issues under four headings: (1) aiding the student in approaching the question with an open mind, (2) helping the student to secure all the information which he possibly can, (3) guiding him in working out a pattern of evaluation of evidence, and (4) directing classroom discussion in accord with democratic principles.

WITH AN OPEN MIND

Nothing is gained in the classroom by the airing of opinions or by "the rationalizing of strong feeling, partisan bias, or selfish interest." At the outset of the study then both teacher and student must decide whether they are going to seek the truth or merely hunt for evidence which will support the position which they may already have taken. The ideal of intellectual integrity must be held in high esteem by all. Now the cultivation of intellectual integrity is not accomplished in "the twinkling of an eye," but by long and tireless effort on the part of the teacher, developing by both precept and example, especially the latter, this highly important ideal which must underlie all intellectual endeavor.

Having fostered this wholesome attitude, the teacher must then aid the students in their quest for the truth. Here the students must be introduced to or aided in the use of previously acquired library techniques. Students, I think, get a real thrill when they learn to use *The Readers Guide to Periodical Literature.* Sending away for material also seems to strike the students' fancy. Getting information on controversial issues is not difficult for so many pressure groups are anxious to pounce upon both student and teacher, dishing out their propaganda.

EVALUATING THE EVIDENCE

Guiding the students in working out a pattern of evaluation of information is a more difficult feat than finding the facts. The students must learn to be cautious . . . . let the reader beware. Everett Dean Martin in his book, *The Behavior of Crowds,* gives timely warning against "the tyranny of ideas uncritically accepted." And many ideas are uncritically accepted due, among other things, to the fact that we teach our students too much respect for the printed page. Henry

Johnson says: "The tendency of pupils accustomed in school to look upon the printed page itself as evidence of the truth of what is printed is to continue in after life in subjection to the tyranny of the printed page."[1]

Now the students in evaluating the information available on any subject must be made cognizant of the necessity of testing all evidence for (1) reliability, (2) relevancy, (3) sufficiency, and (4) interpretation.

Are the facts reliable? How reliable is the source of information? The rather commonplace expression that we hear daily, "Consider the source," is certainly not commonplace in its meaning and implication. The students must learn to follow through, examining carefully the source. Let them ask themselves these questions:[2]

1. Are the statements of facts, which are offered as evidence, reports (a) of observations, (b) of inferences from what has been observed, or (c) "hearsay"?
2. Are the statements of facts reliable?
   (a) Who made them?
   (b) Is he a competent witness?
   (c) What was his purpose in reporting the facts? To make news? To eulogize? To discredit? To convey accurate information?
   (d) Under what conditions were the observations made? Casual observations? Carefully controlled experiments? Emotional stress?
   (e) To what extent did the reporter depend upon memory?

At the outset one runs into difficulty because many students do not understand what is meant by inference, and it is not easy to get this across. Having found a definition and example, the students might profitably spend several days looking through newspapers and magazines for observations and inferences until they are quite conscious of the distinction and alert to detect the difference.

Are the facts relevant? Mathematics teaches us to discard all irrelevant data. Many people believe in confining this skill to working problems in higher mathematics, but the students must learn that this skill is equally applicable to all of life's problems. Note what a conglomeration and mixture of relevant data, irrelevant facts, emotional outbursts, and what have you are brought forth in a discussion of a controversial issue in the realm of the social studies. For example, the question of aid to Britain is apt to get cluttered up with a discussion of the personal disposition and characteristics of an individual Englishman, English mercantilism in pre-revolutionary days, the Irish question, and Mahatma Gandhi. On the question of the right of labor to strike the students may let discussions of labor leaders who are racketeers or individuals who have cheated on "relief" obscure the main issue. Let the students learn to ask themselves these questions:[3]

1. Are all of the facts presented as evidence relevant to the question?
2. How might irrelevant facts be used to serve a writer's or speaker's purpose? To divert interest or attention from other facts? To stir feeling? To shape attitudes and dispositions toward the issue? To change perspectives?

Are the facts sufficient? "Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?" the witness at court is mumblingly asked. The same might be thoughtfully asked of students when discussing controversial issues, especially the second part which concerns the whole truth. It has been said that the artist is known by what he omits. Likewise one's position upon a controversial issue is often known by what one omits. A good way to get this idea across to students in a United States History class is to let them read between five and ten accounts of the Pinchot-Ballinger controversy. They will soon notice how certain facts are emphasized by some authors and totally ignored by others. It will soon occur to them that the concealment of certain facts changes the picture. So it is with all issues, and the students must learn to be cautious about forming a judgment without knowing the whole truth. One does well to keep in mind the words of Benjamin Franklin at the Constitutional Convention: "For, having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being obliged, by better information or fuller consideration, to change opinions, even on important subjects, which I once thought right, but found to be otherwise." But here both teacher and student are confronted with the problem of how to learn the whole truth. However, cognizance of the fact that new evidence might be brought to light which would alter our judgment will at least help the students to maintain open minds on the question.

Are the facts properly interpreted? Noting interpretation placed upon facts is very important. By reading several contemporary newspapers and magazines students can readily see how authors differ in their interpretation of the facts. This should lead them to see the importance of asking themselves these questions: Do the facts necessarily mean what the author has interpreted them to mean? Can they be given any other interpretation?

DISCUSSING THE ISSUE

Having read widely and wisely, having carefully evaluated their reading, the students are now ready to present their findings to the class. Here the teacher has an excellent opportunity to imbue the students

[1]Henry Johnson, *The Teaching of History*, p. 301.
[2]From an unpublished manuscript by F. C. Hood, University of Illinois.
[3]Ibid

with the ethics of democratic discussion, based upon the principle that every one has the right to hear and be heard. Alas and alack, this is not taught in one lesson. I think there is no lovelier way to start this than by having the students read portions of James Madison's *Journal of the Constitutional Convention* in which they see for themselves how people of widely different points of view thrashed out controversial issues of their day through the process of democratic discussion, thereby building a constitution which has stood the test of time. Students in class must understand that teacher and students are engaged in the common pursuit of truth, not in winning a debate, that through the combined efforts of all seasoned judgment may be brought to bear upon the problems of our day.

And so we discuss in our class in American History at the John Marshall High School of Chicago controversial issues of our day. I do not promise that such procedure will save your job or entirely free your students or their parents from prejudice or from looking at questions from the emotional rather than the intellectual point of view. However, I do feel that such procedure points the way to a better approach to controversial issues and, in the words of William the Silent, "It is not necessary to hope in order to undertake, or to succeed in order to persevere."[4]

[4]Cited by Robert Maynard Hutchins in *Education for Freedom*, p. 105.

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A CASE STUDY IN HANDLING CONTROVERSIAL QUESTIONS

by **ELBERT W. BURR**

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Beginning with the question: What should be our attitude toward Russia? a tenth-grade group explore a wide range of materials in search of facts by which to evaluate their opinions and points of view. In the course of their study they learned about problem solving in the social realm where emotions and prejudices too often hold sway. The author is a member of the faculty of the Laboratory School, University of Chicago.

The tremedous expansion in recent years of modern techniques of mass communication has meant that to an increasing degree our children are familiar —however superficially—with some of the major social issues of the day. Many of these are vitally interesting and important to children. If the aim of our schools is the preparation of effective citizens for life in these United States and in our modern world, the discussion of these contemporary social issues, however controversial, must be an essential part of the curriculum of our schools.

Issues in the area of human relationships become controversial only when their proposed resolution conflicts in any way with loyalties to certain basic institutions held by any significant group of citizens in the community. A significant group of citizens may mean any unusually articulate group, an economically powerful group, a religious sect, a social class, a political organization, and so on. These conflicts appear because there are choices to be made in terms of the attitudes and subsequent behaviors on the part of the citizens of the community. They become especially significant for the school when the choices of children are affected through the study of controversial issues in the classroom. The degree to which these possible choices may be opposed to the beliefs of the community groups most closely involved in the preservation of the *status quo,* may be some measure of the extent to which it is possible or desirable to treat that particular issue in the classroom. The degree to which the particular controversial issue seems to be a reasonable concern of children is another limitation frequently imposed by the community—often in defense of the *status quo.* In any community, the school system needs a definite policy regarding the handling of controversial questions. Such a policy should be designed to protect children, the classroom teacher, the school, and the community itself from organized pressure groups on the one hand and careless, inefficient teaching on the other. Without such a policy teachers are hampered in their efforts to help children investigate the social issues in the contemporary world.[1]

SELECTION

The selection of controversial issues for consideration in the classroom is most effective when it is accomplished through cooperative teacher-pupil planning. What may seem to the adult as a highly controversial issue may not seem to children to be remotely related to their problems of living. The most controversial issues which children can study are those which grow out of their immediate experience and

[1]A good statement of the problem of policy making in the teaching of controversial issues is included in the pamphlet, *Teaching Controversial Issues,* the Junior Town Meeting League, 400 South Front Street, Columbus 15, Ohio.

which are of persistent concern to them because they see the problem as their own. Teacher participation is essential because her more mature insight into the factors involved in the selection of a suitable issue for study, economizes the children's time and effort.

As a cooperative venture, the selective process is characterized by a full and free discussion of all alternatives. Each member of the group feels free to propose any issue which to him may seem controversial. The atmosphere of the classroom group is such that its members are anxious at all times to present their ideas, criticisms, and comments for the consideration of the group. The members know that they can speak their minds without fear of reprisal or ridicule. In the process of selecting an issue for study this means that the teacher and the pupils alike will explain their reasons for wishing to study or to pass over certain controversial issues.

Teachers have, in addition, a unique responsibility for the kind of long range planning which will assure children of interesting and profitable experiences in the stimulating yet controlled environment of the school. Children need particular help in making long range plans and in seeing the limitations which the sequence requirements in the curriculum place on the complete freedom of choice within the school program. Children also need particular help in seeing the relationship between past experiences in problem solving and the requirements of the new situation in terms of its demand for skills in critical thinking. It is important to emphasize to children that these techniques may be improved through continuing use and appraisal, adapted to new and increasingly complex situations, and applied to the child's own immediate out of school problems.

Criteria for the selection of issues for study can be developed by the group at the beginning of the school year. They can then be revised and improved as often as may seem desirable. With some practice, the class group will become reasonably effective at setting the limitations of the issue, at inquiring into the availability and adequacy of materials, recognizing the suitability of the issue for group study, and seeing the opportunities the study of the issue presents for meaningful experiences in school and community. It is tremendously important that children be given ample opportunity to put their plans for the study of an isue into practice even though such plans are far from perfect. Emphasis on the continuing appraisal of the techniques of group planning and the operation of selective processes will aid the group in improving upon its own group process.

In the planning sessions in the tenth grade social studies classes at the Laboratory School of the University of Chicago, one of the most difficult problems in the selection of issues for study is that of determining priorities within the limits of the year's program. While demonstrating a keen awareness of the variety of controversial issues confronting them, most of the members of the group are willing to accept the sequence requirement for their grade level—contemporary world problems. They do this with the understanding that if they as a group feel an *extreme urgency* to study some issue not properly a part of this sequence, they can decide to go ahead with it providing that it meets the other criteria for selection. As a partial answer to this problem of choosing what can be done within the time limits, classes frequently set up a schedule of issues to be treated and their best estimates of the time required.

First on the schedule this past year, in terms of time allotment and priority of interest, has been the issue of Soviet-American relationships. The concern of the entire world for friendship and understanding between these two world powers was shared by children here and everywhere. Discussions in the home, reading in the newspapers and periodicals of the day, listening to radio commentators, and hearing the remarks of casual acquaintances stimulated this interest to a point where these tenth graders felt strongly the need for further information. Because the classroom has been for them a place in which they feel confident they can explore and investigate any controversial issue and come to better understandings of problems in human relationships, the group last year selected this as the first most important controversial issue for study.

DEFINITION

After a long discussion which ranged over the entire problem and its important historical antecedents, the class came to recognize the need for defining the problem in such a way that they could develop a plan of attack. This involved making certain specific decisions as to the requirements for an adequate topic or center of interest. It was agreed, for example, that the statement of the issue must itself be challenging to further intensive inquiry and yet be sufficiently precise so that some specific conclusions could be reached within a limited—but by no means rigidly controlled—period of time. The teacher was asked to help by suggesting available sources of information on various aspects of the topic and by discussing possible methods for limiting the area of study. After further consideration, the group decided on the issue, "What Should Be Our Attitude Toward Russia?" They felt—although the teacher was far from convinced—that this limited the issue and provided a basis for the organization of a plan of work for the class.

THE GENERAL SURVEY

Their next step was a general survey of the problem. An outline was developed on the blackboard which included the kinds of information they believed necessary to a broad understanding of the problem.

The suggestions made covered the need for historical information, geographical background materials, economic data, the role of world communist organizations, the need for finding out what communism is, the influence of propaganda, and so on. As these suggestions were listed the class began to see more clearly the magnitude of the undertaking. Someone said that it would take us a year to really study the Soviet Union sufficiently carefully to go ahead with our particular issue. That comment pointed up the need for stating explicitly the reasons for our study and developing criteria for selecting information essential to discovering what our attitudes toward the Soviet Union should be.

While these discussion periods occupied class time, the children were working at a number of activities designed to give them an overview of the problem—a procedure with which they were familiar. General materials including texts, Foreign Policy Association pamphlets, University of Chicago Roundtable transcripts, U. S. Government publications, the New York *Times* News of the Week and Magazine sections, and such partisan materials as the *USSR Information Bulletin* of the Soviet Embassy and the periodical *Soviet Russia Today* were made available. A start was made toward compiling a bibliography of library resources. Some of the children sent letters to their Congressmen for information on the legislative aspects of the problem. Others consulted the visual aids department to find out what films could be used. One student discovered a bookshop specializing in materials about the Soviet Union by Soviet authors and brought a variety of these materials to class. Students were at all times encouraged to read and to listen as a means of getting conflicting points of view clearly in mind before formulating tentative hypotheses for study.

The tenth grade English teacher used this issue as a center of interest for the study of the editorial points of view of contemporary periodicals insofar as these could, in part, be determined from reading a variety of articles concerning relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. This was especially valuable because it gave the children an opportunity for wide reading in contemporary criticism of Soviet-American relationships under the skilled guidance of the English teacher. This activity also gave them an opportunity to discover and to be critical of new sources of information. In the discussion sessions in the English classroom, the articles were analyzed, evaluated, and an attempt made to see to what extent they reflected the opinions of the editor and the attitudes of the magazine's reading public. In these discussions the social studies teacher attended and participated extensively.

THE TENTATIVE HYPOTHESES

After this general overview, the attention of the class turned to the formulation of tentative hypotheses concerning the issue of American attitudes toward the Soviet Union. The class proposed these—in some cases as a group but more frequently as individuals—on the basis of the overview study and an analysis of attitudes already held. They were urged to explore all possible hypotheses and to seek to build a complete range of relevant hypotheses even though the extremes proposed might not be accepted by any of the members of the class. This range represented a continuum of viewpoints held in the community regarding the issue. When completed it extended all the way from the American Communist's point of view to an extremely conservative isolationist point of view. The members of the group were then urged *as individuals* to think through their present positions, to locate themselves on this scale, and to make a note of their attitudes at this time for future reference.

The analysis of the requirements for proof of these tentative hypotheses and a careful review of the previous outline of essential information, made it possible for the class to decide upon certain limitations in the nature and amount of information required by the study. It was decided, for example, that economic data were essential to prove certain hypotheses concerning the economic relationships between the United States and the Soviet Union. This seemed more significant for the present study than detailed information concerning the historical relations of the two nations in the pre-Soviet period. Another hypothesis advanced was that if the people of the two powers could be brought together through wide, personal contacts, greater understanding might develop and that might lead to improved attitudes. The study of this hypothesis required extensive data concerning the attitudes of the people of the two countries toward each other—data which were extremely important even though they proved difficult to assemble. Still another hypothesis was the one so frequently advanced that the two political systems are so completely different that an effective working relationship could never be achieved. Members of the group were quick to point out the difficulty of proving that particular hypothesis. But the effort to state these relevant hypotheses made it possible for the group to plan the collection of data.

THE DATA

With these hypotheses in mind, the class embarked on its next major undertaking, that of organizing, presenting, and appraising the data. Preliminary to the search for data, the group discussed the methods by which information was to be reported. With so many ideas to be investigated and so much material available, it was clear that the class must work in small groups each investigating some particular hypothesis or cluster of related hypotheses. A flexible reporting schedule for these small groups

was set up. The class was encouraged to think of the problem of communication and to select techniques which would best serve to communicate the group's ideas to the class.

Some of the groups prepared to present panels in which information was presented for discussion and group appraisal. One group organized a coordinated series of individual research reports. Another showed some appropriate film strips with a running commentary. Still others prepared to use films accompanied by organized discussion. One group asked to make arrangements to record its panel for a wire recording and subsequent "broadcasting" to the class. A group of children interested in dramatics prepared a series of television dramatizations to show the great variety of ethnic backgrounds and social customs in the Soviet Union. This early attention to reporting techniques aided in the selection of material to be recorded during the collection of data.

Library research proved to be extremely important. Quantities of materials were uncovered but it took painstaking research to discover accurate, or what appeared to be reasonably accurate, sources which could be used as evidence. Again and again, the children became impatient and discouraged because information was so conflicting and because so much of the data was published prior to World War II. Comparisons of the publications of Soviet Union and those in the United States did not provide definitive answers to many of the questions in the children's minds. It did, however, require careful reading and accurate recording of data. Films were shown and studied for evidence of the way the Soviet people lived, the things they did, and the many differences and similarities between their lives and ours. More obvious propaganda techniques were quickly recognized but the class was somewhat slower in its discovery of the more subtle devices—especially in those cases in which it was a point of view they wished to believe. Great excitement was created by the discussions of the authenticity of press reports of alleged Russian slave labor camps and of the progress of atomic invention in the heart of Asiatic Russia.

During the reporting period itself, every effort was made to keep reporting vital and interesting. It was difficult to organize class time so that the group could actively appraise the evidence and arguments as presented. The group finally agreed to permit a criticism to be made at the conclusion of the report with the understanding that a day was to be allowed to validate the challenge. This helped to prevent many unsupported challenges and unfair attacks on individual reports. In cases where there was not sufficient evidence to authenticate either of the conflicting points of information, the class voted on the admissibility of the evidence.

Throughout the reporting period, records were kept by an efficient "secretariat" which prepared a final report for the group. Some of the reporting groups helped the secretaries by providing each member of the class with a duplicated summary of their own reports. Each member of the group was encouraged to keep as accurate a personal record of the proceedings as possible but no emphasis was placed on formal notebook routine.

TESTING THE HYPOTHESES

In testing the hypotheses, the class found itself raising many of the same questions of the interpretation of available data which thoughtful newspaper writers and commentators were at the time discussing. Through discussion in class, some hypotheses were sustained and some proved false to the satisfaction of the entire group. No longer did they believe, for example, that strained relations between the two powers was exclusively the fault of either nation. They were beginning to see some of the Kremlin's reasons for the "Iron Curtain" and the unwillingness of Soviet officials to permit cultural exchanges with the United States. At the same time, however, they became increasingly aware of a rather large number of hypotheses that could not be easily disposed of. There was no clear evidence available. Data conflicted. Conclusions were almost impossible. In these cases, it was necessary to state the conflict in bold relief and to give reasons for suspending judgment at a time when some segments of the American press and radio *were not* withholding such judgments. Emphasis was again placed on a clear statement of the hypothesis, a careful presentation of all of the available data which could be reasonably validated, and the statement of possible conclusions within these limitations.

This activity gave the children in the class an opportunity to examine their own value patterns and to see—however simply—the intricate relationships of their own interpretations of the issue and their own values as applied to the issue. The son of a large industrialist saw for the first time that he was anti-Russian because of his father's opposition to the Soviet economic system. Someone else saw that his favoritism to Russia was based on a romatic ideal of the role of young people in the development of the Soviet Union. Others saw for the first time that criticism of American policy toward the Soviet Union did not necessarily mean that the critic was an American Communist. A girl indicated her concern about the relationship of the United States and Russia as it affected world peace not just for ourselves but for the millions of "little people" in the other parts of the world. Some saw signs of hope—others became more pessimistic. But all of them had *reasons* for the beliefs they held—and they were aware of the tentative nature of these beliefs. They had discovered some of

the factors which have actually shaped the attitudes of American citizens toward the Soviet Union but they had also discovered a body of data and a pattern of critical thinking which could lead to a greater understanding of the issue. Their attitudes might not be much changed but the intellectual basis for holding such attitudes was stronger.

CONCLUDING ACTIVITIES

The hypotheses tested, the group once again analyzed the range of its attitudes toward the Soviet Union. Each class member was encouraged to locate himself on the scale of attitudes—to look once again at his own attitudes in relationship to those held by the community. It was suggested that he look back at the record of his earlier point of view. While no effort was made to have individual children testify as to the nature of changes in attitude, the spirit of inquiry in the classroom was such that almost everyone was anxious to state how he or she felt. Those most willing to state changes indicated a greater degree of understanding of the intricate problem and a much greater feeling of doubt as to the best position for the United States to assume.

The mutiple choice examination given at the end of the study was designed to test the extent to which children could recall and apply specific facts about the Soviet Union to support or to disprove attitudes held by rather large groups of citizens in the community. The point of view which the individual sought to support was important only as a way of determining the clarity and objectivity of his thinking. At the same time, each student was asked to write an editorial for a leading newspaper stating a defensible policy toward the Soviet Union. This activity gave added evidence of the individual's ability to think critically in terms of the issue.

As an important part of these concluding activities, time was taken to discuss the techniques used in the study of this issue, in appraising the processes of critical thinking, in criticizing our activities as individuals and as a group, and in making a list of points to be remembered in organizing the class for the study of other issues.

OUTCOMES

The most desirable outcomes of the study of a controversial issue became increasingly apparent as the group continued in its study of other issues. Parents reported enthusiastically that evening dinner discussions had improved tremendously—even though some admitted that they were anxious for the group to get on to a new issue. There was a great deal of evidence to indicate the extent of the continuing interest on the part of the group in the relations between the Soviet Union and the United States. The group demonstrated a greater tendency to preface remarks in class with comments as to source and probable authenticity. Opinions and propaganda were more frequently and more spontaneously labeled as such. The freedom and familiarity with which children discussed new tensions in Soviet-American relationships were evidence that more effective reading and listening were being done. The testimony of other teachers indicated a high level of continuing interest that carried over to other work in school.

There were outcomes, too, for the teacher. But most of these were an increasing awareness of the problems posed in the teaching of controversial issues. It had been difficult to keep impartial—especially in assisting in the selection of materials. It had been difficult to avoid that cynicism, sarcasm, levity, or facial expression which the children might interpret in most any adverse way. When asked for a personal opinion, it was difficult to restrain a torrent of pleas to accept the teacher's interpretation of what should be an American's attitude toward the Soviet Union. It was necessary to meet the children's charges—sometimes serious and sometimes facetious—of being either pro-Russian or anti-Communist or pro-Administration or anti-United Nations or whatever occurred to them. But the very fact of the conflicting criticisms was encouraging and proved to be sound evidence of the success of trying to be impartial. What was of greatest concern was the gnawing feeling that not enough was being done to help young people to think clearly about the issues in the world today—that they might not have an opportunity as young adults to put the results of their thinking into effective action.

Not for a moment was there any doubt that this had been an important undertaking for children in school and that they felt in a very real sense its significance in their daily lives. Skills in critical thinking and problem solving do develop through the study of important, challenging controversial issues. If these skills help children to be better able to solve the problems they face and to think critically about the world in which they live, such study is vastly worthwhile.

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BUILDING VALUES IN A PROBLEM-CENTERED CURRICULUM

by L. W. HARDING

An exploration of the way in which values enter into and are rebuilt in the process of solving personal and social problems. The needs of boys and girls are seen as the dynamic factor in learning and the democratic value-system is set forth as the basic standard of judgment. The author is professor of Education, Ohio State University.

Those of us who are teachers in the public schools of America at whatever level—kindergarten through graduate school—are continually facing a four-fold responsibility. If we are to meet successfully the challenges of our profession and fulfill our obligations to society and to our students, these four questions must be answered:

First, how can we effectively prepare the young to take their places and assume their responsibilities in the adult society which maintains its schools for that purpose?

Second, how can we locate, identify, and meet the needs of pupils in such ways that they become balanced, well-rounded individuals, improving themselves and the society of which they are a part?

Third, what subject-matter, materials, and processes may we use which are of concern to students —arousing their interests and serving their purposes —while meeting our first two obligations?

Fourth, how can we indentify, develop, and reconstruct values and points of view which, facing problems—especially controversial questions—operate in ways consistent with the democratic framework of our society?

All these responsibilities involve the consideration of controversial questions. Unless we make a complete retreat from present reality or abandon all pretense of meeting our obligations, satisfactory means must be found for dealing with controversial questions and personal problems in the classroom. It is the fourth question which gives the most continuing concern. The development and reconstruction of values is basic to our society. A democratic social framework distributes the powers of decision among the many. All share, to the extent of their opportunities, sense of responsibility, and initiative, in the direction of the social order. For this reason it is imperative that, in our system, all individuals develop sound powers of choice and reach decisions based on wholesome points of view and integrated value patterns.

This has been clearly stated by the Educational Policies Commission as follows:[1]

> "The moral defense of democracy requires the development in all citizens, from the earliest years, of deep abiding loyalties to the central values of democracy; to the conception of the dignity and worth of the individual; to the principle of human equality and brotherhood; to the processes of free inquiry, discussion, criticism, and group decision; to the canons of personal integrity, honesty and fairness; to the idea of the obligation and nobility of labor; to a concern for the good of the community"

[1] *Education and the Defense of American Democracy*, p. 13.

In authoritarian societies the problem is simpler. Power of decision is vested in the few. Those individuals grow in anti-social values, imperious points of view, and autocratic actions, while the many—robbed of opportunity to think for themselves and act upon their thinking—lose the power of self-direction. In other words, they express no biases of their own but must reflect the prejudices of their leaders. This contrast may be carried, as an exact parallel, to our school rooms. What organizations of the curriculum have we developed for meeting our challenges?

CURRICULUM PATTERNS FOR MEETING RESPONSIBILITIES

The skill-centered, textbook-based curriculum is the oldest and still most widely used. This type of curriculum has become increasingly narrow through the use of standardized tests since the tests, rather than the needs and problems of students, determine the content of the curriculum. The way such a curriculum deals with controversial issues and aids in reconstructing points of view is indicated by the requirement of special editions of history texts in various states, based upon their interpretations of slavery, the civil war, and other issues.

The addition of work books to the textbook base appears to make school experiences in this type of curriculum more abstract and remote from the daily lives of children. Such materials, watered down and generalized to fit all customers, necessarily lose any direct bearing upon the actual problems of individual students in any given community. "Centerville," "Middletown," and "Yourtown" are, in effect, no place at all. Such a formal approach, through vicarious experience, has appeared ineffective in developing values or reconstructing points of view. Harold Benjamin's *Saber-Tooth Curriculum* is a sardonic commentary, in allegorical style, upon the sham and emptiness of that approach.

In recognition of the weaknesses of the text-based curriculum, other curricular organizations have been developed, notably the scope-and-sequence approach, the major-social-functions approach and, on the secondary level, the core-curriculum. These plans were to provide more valid approaches to the development of skills and greater opportunity for the development of unbiased points of view. However, the academic emphasis and formal approach continually re-appear, despite efforts to maintain a functional orientation of these newer curricular patterns.

School experiences are educative only to the extent that they help students to modify their behavior in increasingly successful attack upon problems, the solutions of which are important to them. A common complaint among teachers of arithmetic is, "I can get children to work examples, but I can't teach them to solve problems." Why? Because the problems are remote from the lives of children; because of emphasis on blind following of set procedures in working examples, a "monkey see—monkey do" process.

More serious than complaints about problem-solving, spelling, grammar and word-usage, or letter writing are the short-sighted actions, the bigotry and prejudice, the narrow, biased points of view, and the negative, selfish, anti-social values being developed. "'C' is good enough. You're a sap to work for more," "Why dig for all that stuff when you can copy Mary's work book for a dime?" are comments too frequently heard. Scapegoating, name-calling, rejecting members of racial or religious minority groups, reacting in blindly emotional ways to such labels as "Capitalist," "Democrat," "Red," "Republican," "Strike," "Union," or "Wages" are types of behavior often observed. Students take courses in civics, read larger and larger history texts, study topics in social studies, debate according to parliamentary procedure, memorize the Ten Commandments, the Catechism, the Lord's Prayer, and the first ten amendments to the Constitution of the United States. Yet they still act in ignorant, emotional fashion when facing genuine issues. One conclusion from this result must be that the vast amounts of time are spent on predetermined material of no significance to the learners. Hence, the learning is only verbalization which fails to carry over into action. The curriculum we provide must offer appropriate opportunities for individual and cooperative attack at suitable levels upon problems having meaning to students.

THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF VALUES

The term "value" is frequently used in a dual sense. Value is the reason for the advancing of any given relationship between the individual and any specific factor in his experience. In the second, but related sense, value is the quality of any affective aspect of the relationship between the individual and his environment. In other words, a person's values direct the ways he exercises his powers of choice. According to such a definition, values function as criteria for determining the goodness or badness of an act, idea, or relationship. As Dewey puts it, "All conduct that is not simply blindly impulsive or mechanically routine seems to involve valuation and is thus closely associated with the problem of the structure of the science of human activities and human relations."

An integrated system of values promotes consistency of behavior with regard to purposes and goals held as desirable. Cantrell and Allport, reporting on experiments with a test for personal values, concluded that "general evaluative attitudes enter into various common activities of everyday life and, in so doing, help to account for the consistencies of personality."[2]

A student who has been recognized for his ability to analyze problems, organize data, and reach sound, reasoned conclusions may be changed for the remainder of his life by that recognition. Even though it may have been the first real problem he has solved, or the recognition only a brief comment by teacher or classmate, a new mode of behavior has been shown as desirable. His value-system begins a new orientation. He now begins to read carefully rather than memorizing a few key words as he had for the mere passing of objective tests. He considers the source and authenticity of statements before accepting them. He tries to support his conclusions with relevant facts and logical reasons, rather than with random guesses or vociferous agreement. A new criterion has begun to influence his point of view and his behavior: For a person who is fairminded or good at problem-solving, is this the way to act?

DEVELOPING A PROBLEM-CENTERED CURRICULUM

If, as Guthrie has suggested,[3] personality is those modes of behavior which we judge will show comparatively strong resistance to change, then the development of habits of systematic and orderly intellectual processes is to be desired. No other approach seems to offer such promise of this development as does the problems-based curriculum.

As the activities of man change in orientation from a self-dependent, self-directed, and self-supported individualist toward a social-dependent, social-directed, and social-supported, community-minded being, we must make corresponding changes in education. Teachers have been placing major emphasis upon abstract and impersonal "fundamental essentials" which all students must master as tools in the struggle to surpass each other.

To meet successfully the challenges of changing social organization, we must give increased attention

[2] *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 28: 259-273
[3] *Psychology of Human Conflict*. p. 136

to current issues and problems. To be effective, our consideration of such problems must be consistent with sound principles of learning. That means beginning with the learners. Of what kinds are they? What are their attitudes, their acceptances, their beliefs, their biases, their faiths, their hopes, their jealousies, the nature of the neighborhood and community? What their loves, their strengths, their weaknesses? What economic levels, what social stratification, what ethnic groups are represented?

With a thoughtfully and carefully prepared inventory listing the major focal points of value-conflicts, the teacher is ready to proceed. Not revolution, no "new curriculum" of strange import, but evolution of different materials of study. Longer sharing periods, in which students share ideas and opinions, as well as news. Longer, more frequent discussion periods, in which pupils discuss issues and problems of concern to them, without imposition by superiors. Examples, themes and topics for study selected by children according to criteria which they establish, and in terms of their levels of interest and understanding. In this manner, a curriculum becomes problem-centered smoothly and effectively. Such a curriculum, based upon the problems of the group, influences attitudes so that the area of common interest shared by all members of the group is continually widened.

The use of a problem-centered curriculum does not mean that the third-grade child is free to dawdle and play while his classmates clean up the room or build a rabbit hutch. Each member of the group must learn to recognize problems facing him, accept his share of responsibility, and perform his duties. Neither does it mean that antagonisms are allowed to deepen, or prejudices to be strengthened. Careful, continuous guidance and adjustment are necessary.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

In a problem-centered curriculum the role of the teacher becomes at once more important and more challenging. He is no longer the "little devil with the pitch-fork," pricking and pushing unwilling victims through formal exercises of little personal concern to them. Instead, the teacher becomes consultant, confidant, and guide. As the most mature member of the group, charged with the responsibility for the educational growth and well-being of the group, his functions include advice and suggestions in the considering of pertinent, appropriate issues and problems.

One of the major arts of teaching is the sensing of appropriate problems. Identifying problems, recognizing those implied in children's queries, subtly suggesting others related to present activities, arousing interests, focusing purposes, tempering opinions, and encouraging efforts—these are aspects of masterful teaching. Knowing "Why do we believe as we do?" In such an approach one continually asks "What are the enduring values in the improvement of man?"

Time spent and ground covered are not determining values nor have they any place in the value-approach. Rather, the cooperative self-reliance of reasoning beings, abilities to find cause-effect relationships, and integrity to apply supported conclusions —these are the enduring values. It has been said that education is what is left when one has forgotten everything. What remains? One's value-system, attitudes and habits. The recognition that truth, as William James defined it, is that which answers a given set of conditions at a given time. The realization that thinking is an adventure in the organization of facts.

THE PROBLEM-SOLVING ATMOSPHERE

It is necessary that the teacher provide an atmosphere of open-minded inquiry. Only in such a permissive atmosphere do students feel free to introduce issues, raise questions, express their attitudes frankly, explain their confusions, risk their personal judgments, and suggest tentative solutions. If the teacher maintains a traditional role, treating responses condescendingly, in a "Yes, what else do you know that I know?" manner, guiding discussions to always-predetermined conclusions, protecting "feet of clay," and guarding "sacred cows," the problem-centered curriculum will be a hollow sham.

THE SELECTION OF PROBLEMS

Only through active, free attack upon significant problems whose solutions are important but indeterminate do individuals learn how to phrase problems, ask leading questions, suggest relevant information, modify differences, and suggest reasonable compromises, all are involved in the successful use of the problem approach.

The final interpretation of the function and quality of action of the teacher must be determined by the teacher himself. The effectiveness of any approach to teaching depends upon the values held by the teacher using that approach. Consciousness of values, recognition and understanding of the abilities, purposes, needs and drives of students, the function of values in directing their behavior, and a balanced selection and use of appropriate issues and problems are functions of an effective teacher. In recent research[4] the writer found that teachers themselves react in one way to abstract generalizations and in another way to specific problems and issues. Also, that their reactions vary with different issues.

THE VALUE-APPROACH TO PROBLEMS

Our reactions to all opportunities, problems, and issues is first a personal reaction. It is of no use to preach at students that they *ought* to learn how to think, intellectualize, and generalize only from rea-

[4] *Journal of General Psychology*, 38: 31-50.

soned conclusions. One only develops values and sets standards through his own experience. Valuation is always in relationship to the personal qualities of the individual, formulated in terms of past experience, present desirability, and future consequence. The value-approach to controversial issues is "What is right?" rather than "Who is right?" The first question is not "What do we believe?" but all-important techniques of problem-solving. The difficult task of developing self-reliance, cooperation, open-mindedness, and other such aspects of character needs every stimulus possible. It has been shown, in many experiments, that students work better when they have the understanding of what they are doing which results from having shared in the selection of problems for study. Mead and Orth[5] have presented evidence that a problems - centered curriculum results in superior achievement in facts and skills as well as evidence that children's attitudes become more scientific, judgments more reasoned, and values more social.

Immediate personal problems, issues of local importance, and questions of strong interest seem the appropriate beginning points. The major steps usually are identifying the problem clearly, ascertaining the number of children affected or interested and the extent of interest, agreeing upon the problem as significant, and accepting responsibility for investigating it. Depending upon the maturity of the group, the students later move from a personal into a generalized attack: "Do other people have such problems? How do they deal with them? Are the same or similar problems present?

Learning becomes a cooperative social enterprise, to which each contributes in terms of his abilities, but from which each profits in terms of his group membership and the success of the group. Values and points of view are developed and reconstructed in the soundest possible way—through free expression and analysis by one's peers.

TYPICAL PROBLEMS OF CONCERN TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH

In order to secure a recent and comprehensive list, experienced teachers in a graduate course at the Ohio State University, Education 654, were requested to suggest real problems of children as they know them. They listed more than four hundred, by grade levels, of which the following were selected. Grades are grouped for reasons of space but teachers may expect overlapping of problems, due to many factors.

The problems listed below are only suggestive. Many problems and issues will vary from region to region, community to community, and even school room to school room. The important factor is starting with problems of concern to students and emphasizing the value-approach.

[5]*The Transitional Public School,* Pts. III and IV.

Primary (*Kdg*-3)

How can I get along with the other kids, and learn to do things? (The problem of living with others, forgetting self, doing one's share.)

How can I have clothes, toys, and parties the others have? (Problem of understanding socio-economic differences; learning to find compensation for lacks.)

What causes cupped ears, crossed eyes, etc? (Problem of understanding, tolerating and appreciating differences.)

Why do I always have to wash my hands after games, toilet, etc? (Problem of understanding the health habits we need and why.)

Intermediate (4-6)

How can I get to be like the others? (Problem of achieving security through uniformity of dress, manner, and talk; acceptance by a gang.)

What makes me like I am and girls—or boys—like they are? (Problem of adjusting to awareness of self and opposite sex.)

How can I get to go to the movies alone, hiking with the gang, etc.? (Problem of achieving freedom and independence from parental authority.)

Shall I fight or swallow being called a "coward" or "sissy." (Problem of respect of classmates versus praise of mother and teacher.)

Junior High (7-9)

How can I earn more spending money? (Problem of social status and economic independence.)

What is menstruation—puberty? Why does it happen to girls—boys? etc. (Problem of increasing awareness of sex.)

How con I get the attention of the more popular boys—girls in class? (Problem of boy-girl relationships.)

What course shall I take in high school? Should I quit school and get a job? (Problem of vocational choices and economic status.)

Senior High (10-12)

How can I get people to pay attention to me, in spite of poor or average ability in subjects—athletics —social affairs? (Problem of securing recognition.)

How to get Susie—Bill—to like me instead of Tom—Mary—who is a better ball player—prettier? (Problem of adolescent affection.)

What do I talk about and how do I act on a date? (Problem of social adjustment.)

How can I get in the club? (Problem of social acceptance and friendships.) ✦ ✦ ✦

PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO TEACH SOCIAL ISSUES

by **ARCHIBALD W. ANDERSON**

The teaching profession has seldom given attention to the problem of how to protect academic freedom. It seems obvious that the profession should not expect the individual teacher to bear the burden which the entire profession should assume. Yet that is too often what happens when a teacher is attacked for dealing with controversial questions. Even if he has been scrupulous in every regard, the profession is apt to stand idly by and watch him fight the battle alone. This timely article by a University of Illinois professor discusses this crucial question in a challenging manner.

What controversial issues are and how they should be treated in school are questions which are dealt with in other articles in this issue of *Progressive Education.* This article will deal with the question of how the educational profession can safeguard and protect the right of teachers to teach controversial issues in public schools. It is significant that this question needs to be raised in this particular form at the present time. Why should the teaching of these issues need protecting? No one today questions the right of teachers to teach English or foreign languages or the natural sciences. Yet the right of these subjects to be part of the educational program—or, to put it another way, the right of teachers to teach these subjects—was once questioned. In the early part of the nineteenth century, the right of teachers to teach modern languages or natural sciences as part of the liberal arts college curriculum was open to question. The right of elementary school teachers to teach anything more than the three R's also was once questioned. The Kalamazoo Decision is usually interpreted as helping decide the question of whether public funds could be used for the support of high schools. With equal justice, it could be interpreted as helping decide the question of whether teachers had the right to teach the secondary subjects of the time—particularly the linguistic and literary studies—in public schools.

The settling of the question of whether these and other subjects should be included in the public school curriculum, and whether teachers had a right to teach them, may be regarded as a stage in the continuing process of formulating the kind of educational program which is appropriate for a democratic nation and which should be carried on at public expense. The fact that the right of teachers to teach controversial issues is sometimes questioned, and the fact that, consequently, teachers must face the question of protecting that right, merely mean that we have reached another stage in this process of deciding what a democratic program of education should be.

The general question with which this article deals really breaks down into three questions: (1) Is the teaching of controversial issues an educational activity the performance of which is a right to be safeguarded? (2) If so, does the teaching profession, as a profession, have any unique or peculiar responsibility for protecting that right? (3) And, if the answer to both preceding questions is in the affirmative, how should the profession proceed in discharging its responsibility to protect its right to teach controversial issues?

SHALL THERE BE SAFEGUARDS?

The right of teaching controversial issues has the same basic justification as the right to perform any other educative activity. The teaching of these issues is a necessary element in the educational program required by the needs of a democratic society in the modern world.

Such teaching derives both its purpose and its justification from the nature of democratic education. In one sense, controversial issues are simply issues about which no prevailing sentiment or consensus of opinion has developed. Their existence indicates that some problem confronting society is in the process of being settled but no final solution has been evolved. A complex society, such as ours, is confronted by many problems of this sort. It is impossible to explore almost any significant aspect of social culture without encountering them. To ignore controversial issues in school, therefore, would be to ignore society's most basic problems and the areas of contemporary culture in which they are located. An education which did this would be partial and incomplete. It could not effectively contribute to that fullest possible development of human personality which is one of the primary aims of democratic education.

Furthermore, the very essence of democracy is that the members of a democratic society must be capable of participating in the process of discussion and deliberation which leads to social decisions about common problems. It is the responsibility of education to develop individuals capable of participating in this process of dealing with unsolved problems and unsettled issues. It can do so only by helping pupils become aware of what these problems and issues are, and by helping pupils to understand and appreciate the democratic procedures for handling them. Pupils can reach this understanding only by using these procedures. And it is only as pupils engage in democratic procedures under the guidance of the teacher that they progress in the ability to use them.

The teachers right to teach controversial issues, therefore, is based upon the needs of the pupil and the needs of a democratic society. The fact that this right has moral grounding in the very core of the democratic ideal is the ultimate safeguard of the right. When teachers exercise it, they are acting on impregnable moral grounds.

Any moral right, however, must have more immediate safeguards if it is to be exercised. For example, over a period of time many legal and customary safeguards have been established to protect such moral rights as freedom of speech and the other civil liberties. Laws and customs alone, however, do not always protect. Sometimes, as in the case of the civil liberties, organizations and agencies of various kinds are necessary to insure that the protection of law and custom is fully effective. These laws, customs and agencies together may be regarded as the social safeguards of civil and moral rights. The right of the educational profession to deal with controversial issues likewise needs its social safeguards. There is some evidence of progress in the development of these.

Although many groups would still dispute it, there has been in recent years a more general acceptance of the idea that education in a democracy needs to deal with such issues. The widespread and unfavorable publicity given the so-called "Red Rider" in the 1930's—when Congress, through an amendment to an act appropriating money for schools in the District of Columbia, attempted to prevent the indoctrination of pupils with Communistic ideas and only succeeded in suppressing any kind of teaching about Russia—has helped to clarify in the public mind the distinction between teaching and propagandizing. More recently, the 1946 yearbook of the American Association of School Administrators, *School Boards in Action,* stated that school boards had a responsibility for protecting teachers competent to deal with controversial issues from unjust criticism. There has also been some effort in the direction of securing legal recognition and standing for the professional judgment of educators on matters in which they have expert competence. Unfortunately, this effort has been primarily concerned with protecting the school superintendent's professional decisions from interference by lay school boards and has frequently resulted in increasing the superintendent's already too concentrated and too authoritarian powers to make all the professional judgments for all the teachers in the system. Nevertheless, there is value in the idea of getting legal sanction and authorization for the exercise of professional judgment concerning those things within the sphere of the teacher's competence. This would protect teachers in making judgments concerning the methods and materials to be used in achieving the aims of democratic education, and would be a major safeguard for the right to teach controversial issues.

THE UNIQUE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PROFESSION.

The safeguarding of something so important as the right of the teaching profession to perform those educational activities, including the teaching of controversial issues, which are essential in providing an educational program commensurate with the needs of a democracy, is a responsibility of all citizens. Nevertheless,—and this is an answer to the second of the three questions—the teaching profession does have a special and unique responsibility, beyond that of other citizens, to protect its right to carry on these necessary educational activities. In a way that is not true of other citizens, the central concern of the educational profession is the democratic program of education. The carrying on and improvement of that program is its demanding and exacting professional responsibility. This responsibility extends over the whole program and includes a concern both for the democratic aims of the program and for the means by which those aims are sought. The protection of this program is a central commitment of the teaching profession. Since the right to teach controversial issues is essential to the effective operation of the program, the profession, as a profession, is obligated to protect that right.

The fact that the right to teach controversial issues is indigenous both to democracy and to the teaching profession's basic responsibilities has two important implications concerning the procedures the profession may follow appropriately in defending its right to teach democratically. One of these is that teachers cannot act in isolation, waging war in defense of their rights as if the entire remainder of society were the enemy. All citizens, as previously pointed out, have a responsibility to protect the legitimate rights of teachers. The educational profession, therefore, must work with all citizens in meeting this common responsibility. The second implication, however, is that the profession, because of its unique position in a democracy, must take the initiative in clarifying the nature of a democratic society's responsibility for protecting the democratic quality of its educational institutions, and the profession must take the lead in getting society to recognize its responsibility. Furthermore, the educational profession, again because of its unique position, is obliged to take measures, in the protection of its rights, which are peculiar to itself. The obligation to take these measures is a primary obligation upon the profession and does not rest with the same force upon other social groups, although the latter might, desirably, aid the teaching profession in taking them. Some of the ways in which the profession can work with others and also fulfill its own unique obligation are discussed in the following paragraphs.

One way in which the teaching profession can proceed is by helping build the social safeguards which have been described. This requires working

with community groups—both in the local community and in the national community—in clarifying ideas concerning the conditions which must exist if education for democracy is to proceed, and in creating those conditions. Not only is this a justifiable way for teachers to proceed but the ideals and exigencies of a democratic society require them to do so.

THE NEED FOR COMMUNICATION.

Usually, challenges to the teachers right to teach controversial issues do not appear in a general form or in such a way as to attract universal attention. It is for this reason that the profession must assume the responsibility for keeping the problem continually in the public mind. Because attacks on the right to deal with controversial issues are sporadic and often isolated in time and space, people throughout the country, or throughout a state, or even people in a neighboring school district, may not be generally aware that they have taken place. Or if they do know of some specific instance, they are apt to regard it as an exceptional case because they do not know the frequency with which such "exceptional cases" occur. And even if this latter fact is called to their attention, its larger significance may not be immediately obvious to them. It is the responsibility of the profession to make these facts known and to make the public aware of and sensitive to the pervading and fundamental problem the existence of which is evidenced by the facts. In this way the profession could fulfill the first phase of the unique obligation resting upon it, namely, that of taking the initiative in stimulating study and consideration of the problem of protecting the right to teach democratically. So far the profession has failed signally to fulfill this part of its obligation. It has not even established channels of communication adequate to disseminate the facts to its own members. If it is claimed that existing professional journals constitute such channels, the fact still remains that the profession does not make systematic use of these journals for this purpose. Immediate steps by the profession to meet its obligation to keep the public informed of the nature and significance of the problem of protecting democratic processes in education are badly needed.

STRATEGY—OR PUSSYFOOTING?

The full significance of the second phase of the profession's obligation to protect the teaching of controversial issues—the taking of those measures which are peculiar to the profession—does not appear in the general procedures so far discussed. This significance becomes more obvious at the point at which the problem became most crucial. This point is when the problem becomes one of protecting a particular teacher, or group of teachers, in a particular situation.

One approach which is sometimes suggested for meeting the problem in this form is for teachers to act in such ways that a conflict over the teaching of controversial issues never arises. The statement is sometimes made that "the teacher can teach anything if he does it in the right way." If this statement means that when the teacher uses the most effective methods available to attain the ends of democratic education, he would be free from attack in a truly democratic society, then the statement is valid.

Usually, however, what is really meant is that when some group attempting to exert influence upon schools is determined to compel teachers to teach as the group desires, often in ways which the teachers feel are contrary to those dictated by their professional judgment and contrary to democratic practices, the teachers should engage in a "strategic retreat" by yielding to such influence and making up the losses thus sustained after the pressure has been relaxed. This is the counsel of despair. There are so many pressure groups seeking to influence education that a consistent application of this principle would result not in strategic retreat but in utter rout and complete capitulation. Indeed, so conflicting are the pressures upon education that teachers could easily "strategize" themselves into schizophrenia. And although some of the resulting forms of that malady might be of interest to a psychiatrist interested in psychological curios, they would be of no practical use in advancing the cause of democratic education. Nothing is ever gained when teachers, even in the name of strategy, violate their fundamental moral commitment to democracy and to the kind of education which is the strength of democracy.

A variant, and superficial, interpretation of the idea that no conflict will arise if the teacher teaches in "the right way" is the statement that teachers do not get into trouble if they are tactful. This statement is repeated so often that it must have some meaning. But what that meaning might be is not clear. The kind of tact which would be an effective instrumentality for defending democratic education from a determined attack by undemocratic or anti-democratic influences is as obscure as the kind of tact which would be effective in protecting a defenseless man from the crushing coils of a hungry boa-constrictor. If "using tact" means never, under any circumstances, offending influential people or interest groups, then the notion merely becomes a restatement of the "strategic retreat" idea. Another definition of "being tactful" might be that the teacher should propitiate a particular group by making it believe the teacher is favorable to its point of view and is doing what the group wants, and that the teacher should then use the "good will" thus generated as a smoke-screen to hide the fact that he is pursuing quite different ends and doing quite different things. This procedure is a form of intellectual dishonesty which has no place in the democratic process.

What has been said in the two preceeding paragraphs should not be interpreted as meaning that teachers should not be tactful. They should, in dealing with all individuals. This is only common courtesy—and tact is a desirable form of courtesy. The objection is to using it as a substitute for honest and effective methods of dealing with a serious educational problem. Nor should what has been said be regarded as meaning that teachers should not use good strategy. They should, but the strategy used must be democratic in nature and conribute to the attaining of democratic ends. And when issues concerning democratic teaching are sharply drawn, and when the fundamental moral values of democracy are at stake, any tact or strategy which obscures the issues or represents an abandonment of the values is indefensible.

THE CRUCIAL PHASE

The heart of the question has not yet been reached. Even after teachers have used all the appropriate means of establishing rapport with the community, and even after all the tact and strategy consistent with democracy has been used, breaches of academic freedom do occur and teachers are denied the right to deal educationally with controversial issues. The role of the teaching profession in this situation is clear. It has no alternative to taking immediate steps to protect the rights of the teacher.

Professional responsibility, of course, also rests upon the individual teacher and, as things now are, he can expect to find some hazards in exercising his right to deal with controversial issues. But this is no justification for letting him face those hazards alone. The profession cannot expect the teacher alone to bear the brunt and penalties which are sometimes the result of attempting to fulfill a responsibility which belongs to the profession as a whole.

Whether a particular teacher, who sees his right to teach controversial issues threatened, should resist this encroachment to the point where he loses his job is a question of judgment in the light of the existing situation. As things now stand, it is largely a matter for the individual concerned to decide in terms of his own personal circumstances. He knows that the profession is not yet effectively organized to protect him. His judgment must, accordingly, be colored by that fact. It will also be colored by other things; on the one hand, the depth and strength of his commitment to the principles of democratic education and his sense of social and professional responsibility; on the other hand, the obligations in his personal life and his economic vulnerability. No particular moral stigma should be attached to him whatever he decides as long as his own conscience is clear that he has made the best possible choice among his various personal and professional responsibilities.

A very severe moral condemnation, however, can be levelled against a profession which leaves one of its members to wrestle alone with such a moral dilemma, which fails to come to his aid when his job is threatened because he is performing those activities which the profession itself recognizes as a central element of its professional responsibility, and which does not give him its continued organized support in the performance of those activities at all times. Although the teaching profession has been guilty of one or all of these offenses many times, the full force of the condemnation no longer can be fully applied to it. It has moved in the direction of attempting to protect its members in the performance of their professional duties. The gains made are slight but real. Its work in securing the passage of tenure acts has served to provide some teachers with, if not adequate protection, at least more than they had had previously. Also, especially in very recent years, the profession has shown more of a tendency to intervene in local violations of the professional rights of teachers. The work of the National Education Association's Commission for the Defense of Democracy Through Education, and of similar committees of state educational associations, has been along this line. In some instances, they have scored signal successes. In one case, the mass resignation of teachers in a school district, coupled with a joint declaration by the National Education Association and the state educational association that the district was one in which no member of the profession should accept a position, forced the resignation of the offending school board.

The steps which have been taken are in the right direction and should not be discounted. Nevertheless, they are pitifully inadequate when evaluated in terms of the seriousness and magnitude of the problem to be solved. Most existing professional organizations of teachers are so structured that it is very unlikely that any one of them will be able to transform itself into an agency which will effectively protect the right of a democratic teaching profession to perform its proper function. Yet there is bitter need for such an organization. To be effective it would have to be national in scope and it would have to be so constituted that, in addition to working for the more general safeguards mentioned in this article, it could provide systematic and immediately available facilities for investigating situations where violations of teachers' rights have been alleged, to subsidize teachers whose rights have been violated until other jobs have been found for them, and to blacklist school systems which have been guilty of violations until there is assurance that the violations will not be repeated. To perform this function effectively the organization must have courage and it must have strength. It can gain this strength only from the wholehearted support of the entire profession. Whether such an organization can ever be created or whether some other device for per-

forming the same function will be found no one can predict. The type of agency created is of less importance than that the function briefly outlined be performed. It is imperative that that function be performed. Only when this is done can the profession as a whole meet its responsibilities. Only then can each teacher feel secure enough to be an effective agent for safeguarding the right of the children of a democracy to have a democratic education.

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Balloting on the AEF policy, published in the February number, was regrettably small. But the vote ran well over two to one in favor of the new policy.

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AEF members at the University of Illinois led off early in the summer with a one-day conference on "The Role of the Teacher in Politics." John Hanson of the University High School, chairman of the planning committee for the conference, with other members of the planning committee, divided the program into two sessions. The afternoon meeting was devoted to a forum on "Shall Classroom Procedure Be Politically Neutral?" In the evening there was an address on "The Political Role of the Teacher in the Community." The meetings proved that a one-day conference can be a success and should be tried wherever there is a group of AEF members who want to know what they can do to promote progressive education.

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Illustrated by Kurt Wiese
"An utterly fascinating story of a ten-year-old Tibetan girl who braves incredible danger to recover her Lhasa terrier which had been stolen by a mule caravan. Every phase of life in which a child could be concerned is made very real." — *Los Angeles News* *Ages 9-12* $2.50

THE VIKING PRESS 18 E. 48th St., New York 17

We Need Future-Centered Schools

A cursory examination of the educational program from the kindergarten to the university will reveal that from morning till night boys and girls, young men and women, are taught about the past. On every hand they are taught to think about what man has already accomplished. In history, science, English, mathematics, or what-not, stress is placed upon the mastery of man's past intellectual achievements. Always the student is pressed to learn about what has already been done. Seldom, if ever, is he encouraged to think about what might be done in either the present or the future. His eyes are focused on the campfires of his forefathers; seldom does he get a glimpse of the stars by which they set their course.

When a society is undergoing little, if any, change, the school will naturally emphasize the past to the exclusion of the future because what lies ahead is not expected to differ from the past. The individual will be secure, for he knows what will be expected of him and he knows in what respects he can count upon others. In a period of change, one in which change is occurring at such a rate that the individual experiences in his own life time a degree of social modification which past generations could perceive only by recourse to long spans of history, the situation is entirely different. Then the individual lives in a continuous state of insecurity. Wars, depressions, unemployment, inflation, divorce, persecutions are only a few of the social possibilities that hover in the background of every individual to disturb his personal equilibrum and his life expectations. Even the most socially inept member of society senses that his life-plans are subject to unexpected and overwhelming social forces. The individual begins to recognize that whether or not he can realize his life expectations depends as much upon what other individuals think, believe, and do as upon his own intelligence and effort.

This state of affairs characterizes the modern world. Everywhere, in other parts of the world no less than in America, old rules of conduct, traditional institutions, class barriers, and conventional means of production are giving way to new principles and patterns of human living. The old unconscious social rules and controls under which men have lived for hundreds of years, and in some cases for millinums, are rapidly dissolving in the acids of modern science, technology, and social techniques. Under these conditions man must take hold of his own behavior, just as he has taken hold of his physical and biological environment, and deliberately shape his destiny.

Only in this setting does the study of controversial questions have meaning. For a question is controversial precisely because it has reference to the future. The answer to such a question always projects a future state of affairs and it is this transcendent aspect of the question that gives rise to the controversy and arouses emotions and feelings. A controversial question always centers in differences of opinion about the shape of the future which we should strive to achieve.

Since the future is fluid, it can be shaped in many ways. Hence a controversial question has many possible answers. Modern society is afflicted with a multiplicity of conflicting social perspectives. The industrial worker, the farmer, the business man, and the teacher will tend to see the same question in a different light depending upon the kind of future each conceives to be possible and desirable. The same cleavages exist in the classroom. The children of all social and occupational groups are to be found in the school. Boys and girls carry around in their personal structures the same elements of personality as are to be found among members of the adult groups from which they come. The study of controversial questions in the classroom will therefore involve the same kind of controversy about the future as that existing in the community.

If the foregoing analysis is correct, it follows that controversial questions can be studied intelligently only if deliberate study of what the future ought to be is made a central feature of the educational program. For only as boys and girls come to grip with the problem of determining the goals which we as a people should attempt to achieve for ourselves, not as individuals, but as a people, can the study of any controversial social question be answered in terms of the common good.

In this period of social uncertainty and confusion it is not enough to help boys and girls understand social trends and think about social problems, no matter how thoroughly and critically these things may be done. In addition, the youth must be encouraged to project their thinking into the future, to conceive the kind of social ends and relationships it is possible to build within the bounds of basic social trends, and to think constructively and cooperatively in the projection of social goals for our time. Only as we have a citizenry capable of deliberately constructing the future as they work with the present can we expect to weather the social storms which are destined to mark the twentieth century. ——B. Othanel Smith

Catastrophe Or New Life

—A Review of Two Books

by **GEORGE E. AXTELLE**

Crisis has become the normal state of affairs in the Western World. Fascism, communism, monopoly, inflation, depression, war, inflation and again impending war mark the crises of our generation. How shall we view our age? Is crisis normal to history; do we see our time out of focus and exaggerate its critical character? Or do we approach Armageddon, the final struggle of Good and Evil? Has our civilization grown so complex that it is no longer manageable? Has it grown beyond man's powers of control? Is this the collapse of Capitalism, or is there something in our civilization even more deep-seated which seems to drive relentlessly toward ultimate catastrophe? In short, is man rushing toward ultimate catastrophe, or are there signs of new life? Are we in the death throes of civilization, or is this chronic state of crisis the birth pangs of a new Civilization? Many, I am sure, ask themselves such questions.

Lancelot Whyte[1] believes that we are witnessing the collapse of European civilization (of which we are a part), but that a new and grander civilization is struggling for birth. He believes that European civilization is founded upon basic values and modes of thought which are contrary to the nature of man and nature, hence that lead into frustration after frustration. However as men forsake old values and modes of thought because of their failure to lead them fruitfully, their dissillusion will clear the way for ideals and modes of thought, more congruous to the nature of the world and man, which will lead to effective control of their common life. This shift from the values and modes of thought of European civilization to a new way of life will involve a cultural transformation as profound and extensive as the shift from pagan to modern civilization.

This is not to say that it will disavow the fruits of European civilization. On the contrary he thinks that most of the materials of our civilization will be encorporated in the new, but with some important differences. These differences involve a change in perspective in which the great achievements of the western world will remain, but in such a way that they will function in an organic culture. The basic conditions of dissociation and conflict will be removed which will permit modern man to make full use of his powers and resources, and to live as a whole man in a unified culture. Peace and unity can come to man and the world only when man has disavowed the values and modes of thought which universalize conflict in both himself and his culture.

[1]Whyte, Lancelot L. *The Next Development of Man*: New York, Henry Holt & Co. 1948. 322 pp.

The real question is whether the collapse of the old may not destroy the new growth struggling for birth. Whyte believes that the vast superiority of the new, its greater effectiveness in meeting situations in which the old is helpless will lead to its ready acceptance, and that this betokens a period of profound and rapid transformation, probably within our own life time. It is this faith of Whyte's which gives the book the quality of sublime epic, an epic in which we are participants, the epic of our own future. He prophesies an integral civilization with unlimited vistas, a life in which man can be at one with himself and his fellows, a civilization with even greater possibilities of growth than our present civilization has realized.

His prophesy, however, is no ordinary utopia, no universal nostrum. It is based upon an analysis of basic conflicts in our thought and our culture, and upon an assessment of the new materials of our culture which promise redemption. Whyte argues that we are at the end of a long period of development which had its origin in the first and second millenia B. C. Western civilization, he says, begins with the rise of the ancient universal empires of Egypt and Asia Minor, the birth of monotheism, and the emergence of universal ideas and Plato's Rationalism.

These developments, he thinks, were the expressions of a profound transformation in pagan man resulting from a more differentiated and complex culture. The older culture had organized man's impulsive life into a pattern of tradition, providing an equilibrium between his impulsive and his deliberate behavior. With improvements in the arts of production, greater differentiation of function, greater cultural complexity, and the emergence of leisure, this equilibrium was disturbed.

The emergence of leisure for some gave them the opportunity to exploit the satisfactions of their impulses. It resulted in excess, sensuality, licentiousness and bestiality, eventually in dissillusion with the satisfactions of the "flesh". With the greater complexity of life the older tradition became increasingly inadequate. A greater burden was placed upon deliberate behavior. The necessity for moral choice made man conscious of himself and his inner processes.

The disturbance of the organic equilibrium of impulse and deliberate behavior led man to a knowledge of Good and Evil. He discovered the life of the spirit. He became self-conscious; he knew conflict, shame and guilt. The demands of the spirit warred with the demands of the "flesh". The fall of man

really represented, not the supremacy of the "flesh" but rather the acknowledgment by the community of the supremacy of the spirit. But the community taught man that his fall from grace was due to his impulses, whereas the real tragedy was that he could not avoid accepting as inescapable the eternal warfare of spirit and impulse. Thus the growth of self-consciousness created a dualism in his tradition. His tragedy lay in the belief that this dualism was due to a permanent dichotomy in his own nature, a dichotomy, in fact between nature and spirit. Thus his ideals, his valuational life became separated, if not in actual conflict with, the dynamics of nature and life through which only could ideals be realized.

Thus man was conceived as part nature, part spirit; belonging to utterly dissimilar if not contradictory realms of being. Specific conflict was universalized and attributed to the very nature of things, therefore irreparable. Man was doomed to eternal warfare within himself and with nature. Thus universality was achieved at the expense of inner dissociation. The struggle of the spirit against the "flesh" began. The dichotomy of spirit and nature, isolated ends and means and gave a metaphysical status to frustration and conflict. It drew man's attention away from the effective relations of means and ends and thus confused his moral struggle. It deprived man both of the conditions essential to the validation of his ideals and the means essential to their fulfillment. Thus the life of values lost realism and the life of nature lost ideal quality. Ideals are ineffectual and daily endeavor "materialistic". The separation of spirit and nature obscures and falsifies the role of ideals and of mind in nature and their place in action. It isolated man from his natural and human environment. It deprived nature of its ideal and intellectual qualities, in turn depriving them of fulcrum and leverage. It misconceived the nature of both man and his world.

With Plato this dichotomy reached its consummation. The world of sense and desire became for him the world of mere opinion, of illusion and appearance. The "real" World was the world of absolute, universal ideas, the world of the Good, the True, the Beautiful, the world of pure concepts, of mathematical abstractions. The "real" world was a world of permanence, of eternal things. Change and flux were unintelligible, hence had no "real" being and belonged only to the world of sense, illusion and appearance.

Plato expressed the central assumptions of western thought. His Doctrine of Ideas systematically developed the concept of the isolation of spirit and nature, of the ideal and material, of thought and action. In addition it degraded change to the status of illusion and indentified the permanent, unchanging and eternal with the "real".

These two assumptions infect not only our social-moral-political life, but our very mode of thought, our concept of intelligence and the nature of logic itself. As much as subsequent thought differed from Plato on specific matters until recent decades it has rarely challenged his basic assumptions. The history of western thought is the history of the working out of the logical possibilities of these assumptions. It is these assumptions that Whyte challenges. He thinks that western thought has reached the limits of its development within their framework. He points out the intellectual difficulties inherent in them and their practical consequences.

Darwin's theory of evolution, the very concept "origin of species" challenge the assumption of the static character of species. It revealed instead a world of change, of evolution, of development which is open ended, which does not move within eternal limits. The development of the physical, biological and human sciences in recent decades reveals the essential continuity throughout nature and between man and nature. The concepts of "field" in physics, of ecology in bioligy and of situation in psychology all emphasize integrity of any object with its environment. We can no longer speak of organism or environment as separate. We can understand the organism only as integral in its environment. We can understand thought only as a function of a situation including the organic, and the physical and social environment. Not only does modern science reveal man as an organic part of nature, it reveals nature in all its forms as dynamic.

To say that nature is dynamic is to say that the forms of nature are themselves in process of change, that the fundamental facts of nature are process and development. To say that change is universal, however, is not to say that change is arbitary or chaotic. Nature is rather a system of systems of change, or process. There is an underlying order of change, a continuity from earlier to later. So far as change reveals this continuity it is *process*. This continuity is universal and constitutes the unifying order which can be recognized throughout all the diversity of specific change. This comprehensive order we call nature. It is the business of science to discover the recognizable continuities of processes, the relations among systems of change.

The great developments in the sciences, in mathematics, in logic and philosophy during the past half century are the expressions of the enormous shift in emphasis from the dualistic to the unified, and from the static to the processive forms of thought. These developments are extending to law, jurisprudence, government, economics, education and religion with great fruitfulness. The concept of democracy as a way of life is an expression of these developments in the realm of the socio-moral. The concept of growth in education and the newer concept of learning as

thoughtful attack upon problematic situations are expressions of these developments in education. The development of psycho-somatic medicine is an expression of the continuity of body and mind. The concept of religion as devotion to the value quality of life is another expression of the new outlook.

Whyte is confident that the superior efficacy of the new mode of thought and the superior appeal of the system of values which these new assumptions call forth will give such a competitive value to the new outlook that it will readily transform our culture before it collapses. The new can supersede the old only as the old proves its bankruptcy and leads to disillusion. "When a great ideal has ceased to illuminate the human understanding and has therefore lost its power, man has no choice but to search afresh for some element in the processes of the real world with which to identify himself. At such a moment men believe they have lost something beyond price, for a grand vision has faded into despair and self-assurance given place to humiliation of man's inability to understand himself. Yet the loss of what has been found to be only a beautiful illusion may leave the way clear for the discovery of a new course of development... When the guiding theme of any field of activity has gone beyond hope, the formative processes immediately begin to shape the new course...until the old has gone the new cannot take its place. The change cannot come until neither loyalty to the old nor fear of the new can longer delay it" (*ibid.* p. 20)

I have here only indicated the central theme of the book. I have not discussed his method of analysis nor his system of thought. Space did not permit. The book is essentially an experiment in the philosophy of history as well as a statement of a basic philosophic view. He makes a very provocative analysis of the history of European civilization and of nine major figures in western thought. This reader felt the book lacked some in logical structure and that it was needlessly repetitive. These however, are picayune criticisms in terms of the real merits and provocative character of the book.

The second volume[1] might at first glance appear unrelated to the first. Actually, however, it is an admirable companion. Kelley reports some studies made at the Hanover Institute on visual perception. He is interested in showing the significance for education of the findings on the nature of perception, of knowing and of life itself. After an initial chapter devoted to social orientation, Kelley makes a penetrating analysis of some common assumptions of education. Here we have an excellent unwitting statement of the educational implications of the basic assumptions which Whyte criticizes. It was therefore a real joy to read this bok after reading Whyte. It is recommended the two be read together and in that order.

Chapter III presents the findings of the Hanover Institute and relates them to the assumptions of Chapter II. Since all education has to work through perception of one kind or another it is important to note how well our educational practices accord with the experimental findings. I know of nothing in the literature which more simply or emphatically discredits the conventional and essentialist conception of education. Kelley shows that this conception simply has no relation to the reality of perception.

It would take more space than is here available to review the experimental findings and to indicate their educational implications. The book is discussed here because it so admirably makes Whyte's case in the field of education. This little book belongs on every educators bookshelf. It should utterly deflate the essentialists and the notion of a program of "essentials" prescribed in advance. However I seriously doubt whether they will ever catch the point.

I would caution against judging the weight of this book by its size. Whoever writes on educational psychology without digesting the import of this volume does so at his peril.

[2]Kelley, Earl C.; *Education for What is Real*: Harper and Brothers, New York, 1947. 114 pp.

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The Central Illinois Division of the AEF held its annual spring conference at Illinois State Normal University, Normal Illinois, on May 1. The theme of the conference was "Building Secure Citizens for the World of Tomorrow." The morning program emphasized the kind of world our pupils face and the way in which we can go about the task of helping them build security in it. The afternoon was devoted to discussion sections in which the theme of the morning was pursued further through group discussions. The groups took up such questions as the following: How to foster democratic relationships in the classroom? How to improve the emotional climate of our classroom? How to change the social studies programs to meet tomorrow's world? How to make the world safe for differences among cultural groups?

Here Are The Freedom Pamphlets!

"The Responsibility Is Ours," by Mrs. Bonaro W. Overstreet recently released is the first publication in the Freedom Pamphlet Series. A number of pamphlets in the series are being cooperatively prepared by the American Education Fellowship and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. Altogether there will be twenty pamphlets in the series. Under a special arrangement between ADL and AEF, made early last Fall by Professor Theodore Brameld of New York University, a vice-president of AEF, the two organizations will jointly sponsor and promote the series.

The popular style pamphlets covering all phases of the American scene is the newest project in adult education with which AEF has been connected. The Freedom Pamphlets are a series of documents dealing with the most important problems of our times—the relations of men with their fellowmen of various races, creeds and national origin. Areas covered by the series include education, theater, radio, literature, films, art, politics, science, labor, cooperatives and international cooperation.

The pamphlets are being written by outstanding authorities selected to interpret the social dynamics in their respective fields and professions. Each author will bring specialized talents and experience to bear on the problem of human relations. Frank N. Trager, ADL program director is editing the series and Dr. Brameld is acting as editorial consultant.

The first AEF pamphlet, and the first pamphlet in the Freedom Series, "The Responsibility Is Ours," is written by an authority on adult education and community action. Mrs. Overstreet is an author, teacher and advisor to community councils. She has served with the American Association for Adult Education and is an editor of the magazine, "The National Parent-Teacher."

In the innaugural pamphlet, Mrs. Overstreet analyzes the problem of individual responsibility for building better human relations wherever they exist, with friends, within the family, in the community, the nation, or the world. She shows how the individual and his aspirations can count for something in the world of today, and the important part he can play in bringing about a more vital human society.

The second AEF pamphlet is written by Professor William H. Kilpatrick and is entitled "Modern Education and Better Human Relations." Dr. Kilpatrick is professor emeritus at Teachers' College, Columbia University. This pamphlet is scheduled to be released sometime in November.

Other AEF pamphlets have been received and are in the process of being readied for publication. They include "The Future of Science and its Social Obligations," by Norman Boardman, "Shall Children, Too, Be Free?" by Howard A. Lane, and "The Crisis in Civil Rights," by Edward J. Sparling.

Additional AEF pamphlets in preparation are: "The School Centered Community" by S. E. T. Lund "The Labor Movement-Vanguard of Democracy" by Thomas E. Posey "Politics and Education—A needed Partnership" by Morris Appel "Building Bridges Toward World Understanding" by Harold Benjamin "Group Discussion: Grass-Root Democracy in Action" by Kenneth D. Benne.

Plans call for bi-monthly issue of the Freedom Pamphlets. The next title in the series is "Danger in Discord." In this pamphlet, Dr. Oscar Handlin, assistant professor of social science at Harvard University, and his wife, Mary, undertake a sociological examination of the roots of anti-Semitism in the United States.

"ABC's of Scapegoating," a revised edition, by Dr. Gordon Allport, professor of psychology at Harvard University, will be in the series. "The Radio Listeners' Bill of Rights," by Charles A. Siepman, will be in the series of pamphlets.

Although the pamphlets cost only $.20 each, they may be obtained more cheaply if purchased in quantity. The bulk prices are: 100-299, cost $.18, 300-499, cost $.17 and 500 or more, cost $.16. The Pamphlets may be purchased from the American Education Fellowship at 34 Main Street in Champaign, Illinois, or from the Anti-defamation League, 212 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, New York.

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A pamphlet worth writing for: *Making Democracy Work in Your Community, A Group Action Guide,* by Helen Trager and Spencer Brown. Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 212 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y. Revised, 1948.